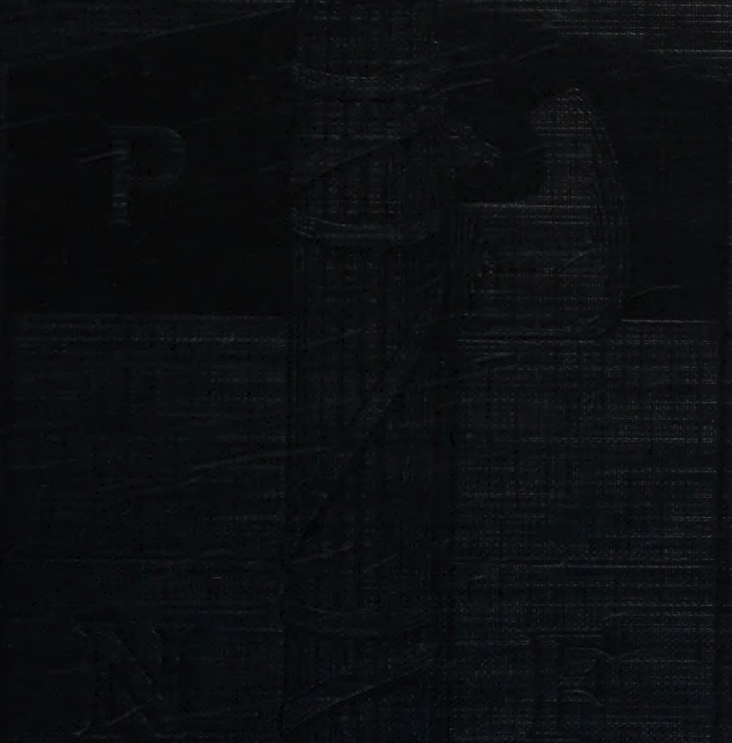
MUSSOLINI and the New Italy



By
ALEXANDER ROBERTSON

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To Mlle Ealth Robertson
With Kindest regards &
in memory of a happy
meeting at Ca' Sinian
Venice
from The Author
Alfonso Robertson

Ca' Sinian
Venice
12 May 1928

MUSSOLINI AND THE NEW ITALY

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KING GEORGE AND MUSSOLINI

MUSSOLINI
and
THE NEW ITALY

Head of the Italian Government

Duce of the Fascisti

By

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON

Cavaliere of the Order of SS. Maurice & Lazarus

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Dedicated
to
My Dear Friends,
JUNE
and
WILLIAM SEAMAN BAINBRIDGE

PREFACE

IN the following pages I have endeavoured to give a brief account of the life and work of Benito Mussolini. The name of Mussolini is on everyone's lips, but, as the most diverse and contradictory statements are in circulation about him, the public are at a loss what to believe. I have not dealt with any of these statements and opinions, but I have given the main facts of his life, from boyhood to the present time, so that each can thus form his own judgment regarding him.

Mussolini's life consists of two distinct, contrasting and indeed conflicting parts. The dividing line of these is the Great War. That European event completely revolutionized him in character and in life. It made him a new man and launched him on a new career. In the first part of his life he was an ardent socialist. Wherever he went he promoted class warfare, setting the workman against the employer, the tenant against the proprietor, the servant against the master.

In the second part of his life he is the ardent democrat, uniting the workman and the employer, the tenant and the proprietor, the servant and the master, in a common brotherhood, so that in Italy there is no longer any class warfare, there are no longer any strikes and lockouts, but all work harmoniously together. It is no longer "each for himself," but "each for all" and "all for each"—"each helping each, the highest good to gain." And all in subjection to the State, the supreme good and greatness of which all are seeking to promote.

For various reasons the Allies have cause to be grateful to Mussolini. In the first place, it was largely owing to him, backed by his sovereign and the great bulk of the people, that Italy, in May, 1915, entered the War, in spite of a government pledged to neutrality. We all know the splendid contribution Italy made to the gaining of the final victory over the enemy. Then, again, Mussolini saved England and America from a concerted Bolshevist attack planned by Lenin. Lenin said that he would conquer Italy and then make it his war-base to attack these countries. It was Mussolini who frustrated his nefarious design. While

King Victor Emmanuel III. and his troops were on the battlefield, Lenin had poured into Italy his emissaries, laden with gold, by scores and hundreds. They, alas, made only a too successful propaganda, for they were in power in Rome, and in the municipalities of all the chief cities, and were running Italy into bankruptcy and ruin. Instead of the heroes of the War being met by a friendly welcome, they were reviled and insulted.

It was then that Mussolini raised the standard of Fascismo and called upon all ex-soldiers and all patriotic citizens to rally round it and wage a war of extermination against these enemies of Italy and of humanity. His call met an enthusiastic response. Victory attended his arms everywhere, and finally, in October, 1922, when Facta, the Premier, in despair wished to put all Italy under martial law and make war on Mussolini, King Victor Emmanuel III., on his own initiative, ignominiously dismissed him and his ministers, and called on Mussolini to take the reins of government. It was thus that Mussolini, saving Italy from a ruinous Bolshevism, saved also England and America.

During the five years that Mussolini has

been in power he has created a new Italy. Travellers, who have been here before, no sooner cross the frontier than they are conscious of a change for the better in the very appearance of the country. The fields and farm-steadings show prosperity. Huge tracts of what were pestilential swamps, the breeding-places of malaria and fever-carrying mosquitoes, have been drained and cultivated and now bear heavy crops of grain. Industry, commerce, shipping and shipbuilding are all flourishing. Above all, the people have undergone a change for the better, too. There is no longer any laziness and idleness. There is no talk of short hours and a big pay. Work is largely undertaken for its own sake. Even wages are not regarded, by thinking men, as a compensation for work, but rather as a means to enable them to work the more.

The people, as a whole, are thoroughly disciplined and law-abiding, and so are free. Mussolini has taught them that there can be no freedom apart from all—that voluntary submission to law, whether divine or human, is liberty—is what the Apostle James calls "the perfect law of liberty."

Mussolini is also a true reformer. He has

raised the whole moral and spiritual tone of society and of the nation. Millions, on his initiative and request, have taken an oath to conduct themselves always, whether on duty or off duty, in a manner becoming the citizens of a New and Regenerated Italy. And never did Mussolini appear to me more of a reformer than when, with the Book of books in his uplifted hand, he said to the people: "*Il Nuovo Testamento è il migliore libro che io connosca nel mondo*" (the New Testament is the best book I know of in the world). That is the true charter of labour and of liberty, possessing which, Italy and any other nation will go onward and upward from strength to strength, from victory to victory. As Fra Paolo Sarpi said of the Republic of Venice, "*esto perpetua.*"

ALEXANDER ROBERTSON.

Ca' Struan,
Venice.

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I

MUSSOLINI, THE BOY

"He who serves his country well has no need of ancestors."

—VOLTAIRE.

I

MUSSOLINI, THE BOY

FORLI is the name of the station about half-way on the railway line that runs between Bologna and Rimini. A few miles to the left of this station lies the hamlet of Dovia, which is in the commune of Predappio. It consists of an irregular line of houses, some of which are two stories high, but the majority are but of one. A curious feature of quite a number of these houses is that their upper floors are reached, not by an inside staircase, but by a massive stone one built outside. The ground floors are often used as work-rooms or shops, while the families dwell in the rooms above. In one of these houses which Mussolini himself calls a *vecchio casolare* (an old tumble-down house) he was born on the 29th of July, 1883. His father, then a young man of twenty-nine years of age, was called Alexander and his mother Rosa Maitoni, and he was the eldest son of their three children, the others being Arnaldo and his sister Edvige.

If the house was then a tumble-down one, it is so no longer, for, quite recently, the peasants in the district subscribed some 12,000 *lire*[1] to purchase it. They then put it in order and presented it to Mussolini. So now the house is easily identified, for it has on its façade a small marble tablet bearing Mussolini's name and the date of his birth. In just such a house, at Pieve di Cadore, in the Dolomite Mountains, Titian was born. When I last saw it, it was used as a barber's shop. Some time ago it was, like Mussolini's birthplace, restored and had a marble nameplaque affixed to it, shortly after which, by royal decree, it was declared to be a national monument. Perhaps the day may come when the *vecchio casolare* of Mussolini may be similarly distinguished by being made a national monument. Already the village street in Dovia, where it stands, is called Corso Benito Mussolini.

The father and mother of Mussolini were a contrast to each other in many respects, for example, in disposition, temperament and upbringing. Yet both were remarkable persons. Mussolini himself has written not a

[1] 92 *lire* equal approximately one pound sterling, and 19 *lire* approximately $1.00, in March, 1928.

Photo. Porry-Pastorel, Rome

THE HOUSE IN WHICH MUSSOLINI WAS BORN AT PREDAPPIO

little about them, and the following are a few prominent facts which he has told us.

About his father—he was uneducated, never having been to school, and he spent his whole life in the commune of Predappio in which he was born, in November, 1854. In the village of Dovadola he learned to be a blacksmith, and when a young man of twenty-six years of age, or so, he went to Dovia, where he began business for himself. He was kind-hearted but boisterous, sometimes even to violence, and he was an ardent Socialist, or, as Mussolini calls him, an Internationalist. Mussolini bears in his Christian name a proof of this, for his father had him baptized Benito, after Benito Juarez, who led the rebellion in Mexico against the Emperor Maximilian, in 1867, and who himself became its constitutional president in 1871.

How his father came to imbibe Socialistic ideas, Mussolini himself says he does not know—but they soon got him into trouble, for he was arrested and imprisoned for some months in the *Rocca di Forli.* This was shortly before his marriage, but after his release he was placed, as Mussolini tells us, for three years and six months under police surveillance. This was his condition when he

married and when Mussolini was born. Mussolini quotes a document dated 21st September, 1882, signed by the Mayor of Predappio, which permits his father to leave Dovia for one day only, in order to go to Forli, but obliging him to return home that night.

But soon after that, times changed. The Socialists came into power and Mussolini's father was first elected a Commune Councillor, and afterwards he became the Mayor of Predappio! This fact shows us that he must have educated himself, and also that he must have possessed considerable administrative power, for, as Mussolini tells us, he did much work of indisputable public utility, such as improving the public roads and making new ones. However mistaken his ideas were, he had the public welfare at heart.

Mussolini's mother was also born in the commune of Predappio. She was well educated and, indeed, gained in the normal school of Forli her diploma as an elementary school teacher. She then taught in some of the village schools in the commune till her marriage, in 1882. But this event did not put a stop to her teaching, for she opened a private school for little children in her own house. The *vecchio casolare* was thus well

occupied, for the ground floor served as the smithy and the floor above as dwelling-house and schoolroom. Mussolini's mother was gentle, humble, refined, and a good Christian, striving at all times to live "soberly, righteously and godly." However rough and boisterous her husband might be in the smithy and amongst the village men, he was always quiet and good-mannered in her presence. As a teacher she realized what the mother of the Marquis d' Areglio, the Prime Minister of Victor Emmanuel II., tells us that his mother did, that "we are all made of one cloth, the first foldings and plaitings of which never disappear," and so she was careful in what she said to the children and prayerfully anxious to implant in their young hearts and minds love to God and to one another, knowing that "love is the fulfilling of the law." She seemed to love everyone and everyone loved her. Mussolini loved his father, but adored his mother.

She took him frequently to religious services, but he tells us, "I was never able to remain long in church, especially when great ceremonies were being conducted. The red flickering lights of the candles, the oppressive odour of the incense, the colour of the priests'

robes, the slow drawling singing of the people, and the sounds of the organ greatly disturbed me."

Naturally, his mother was his first teacher, and before Mussolini was five years of age she had taught him to read quite fluently. The following year (for six is the age when all Italian children must attend the national school) he was sent to school in the town of Predappio, the capital of the commune of that name to which I have frequently referred. However, the restraint of school life was irksome to his restless spirit, and he often played truant, as he himself said, "I was a truant by instinct." He loved running about in the green fields and "paddling in the burn, from morning sun till dine." Like all boys, too, he was fond of fruit, and as the plain which runs up to the base of the Apennines, which mountains separate it from Florence, is rich in orchards and vineyards, he did not hesitate to help himself to apples, pears and grapes when he could do so. Indeed, in a brief sketch of his early life which he himself has written, he tells us he was an audacious *ladro campestre* (a rural thief). Being such, he stole fruit, but he did more than that, he also stole birds.

Let me explain in a few words how such a thing was possible. In many rural and mountainous parts of Italy there is constructed what is called a *roccolo.* This consists of a circle of trees planted close together and trimmed like a hedge. On these trees nets are hung. On the open space so enclosed, decoy singing birds are placed in cages. Outside the circle of these trees there is a tower in which a man or a boy sits with a *spauracchio,* a fan-shaped article of wickerwork like a basket lid, in his hand. When he sees a number of birds on this enclosed space, attracted by the decoy singing birds, he skims this *spauracchio* across the the tops of the trees. The frightened birds fly to right and to left and are caught in the meshes of the net. These were the birds Mussolini stole out of the meshes of the net. Thousands of migratory birds are caught in this manner. I have seen two thousand of them on the market of Belluno, in the Dolomite Mountains, of a morning.

Many stories are told of the risks Mussolini ran in his bird and fruit raids. Once, he tells us, when he had secured a number of birds he was chased by the proprietor, who was steadily making up on him. Fortunately

for him, he reached a stream, into which he plunged and splashed until he reached the other side. The proprietor stopped short on the bank. In describing this adventure, Mussolini proudly says that he never let go his birds, so he ultimately saved himself and them, too.

Signor Beltramelli and others tell a story in recard to his stealing of apples which brings out an heroic trait in his character which has characterized him through life. He, with a group of other boys, was on a predatory excursion to secure apples. They helped one of the youngest of their number to climb a tree so as to shake down the fruit. While doing this, the proprietor suddenly appeared, running towards them, shouting and threatening them, with a huge stick in his hand. The youth up in the tree, terrified, leaped to the ground, breaking his leg; all his companions hastened off, but Mussolini, hearing the boy cry for help and seeing him lying helpless on the grass, instantly hastened back and, picking him up, placed him on his shoulder and carried him off to a place of safety.

Besides being an orchard and *roccolo* raider, Mussolini was a born fighter, and he

was never afraid to tackle boys older and bigger than himself. He says of himself: "I was a little rogue, restless, exacting, passionate, pugnacious and ever ready to fight. Often I came home with my head broken with stones, but I knew how to avenge myself." I believe some of his youthful antagonists, now grown to manhood, still bear in their bodies, and show with a sense of pride to others, the scars they received in their boyish combats. Still, Mussolini was a kind-hearted boy. He would, although hungry himself, share his frugal meal with his companions and, as the apple-tree incident shows, help them when in difficulty.

Mussolini's schooling at Predappio lasted three years. This brings us to 1892, when he was nine years of age. The question was now debated in the family as to what should be done with him. His father wished to make him a smith, he had already helped his father in the smithy in many ways—blowing the bellows, bringing iron to red heat, and even hammering it into shape on the anvil. But his mother was set against such a project, for she knew, what perhaps his father did not know, that in spite of all his wild, boyish ways he was a born student and a born orator.

She knew that he devoured every book he could lay his hands on. She knew that in his bed-room he would address an imaginary audience with a loud voice and vigorous gesticulations. Marga, an authoress, tells us that when she would enter and say, "Benito, are you mad?" he would answer, "No, Mother, I am practising public speaking, for the day may come when Italy will have need of me!"

It was Mussolini's "calling" that led him, when but a boy, to address imaginary audiences in his bed-room.

About six miles from Mussolini's home, on the road to Bologna, is the town of Faenza, a name well known because of the enamelled ware for which it was famous in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, called fayence. Here there was a Salesian college or boarding seminary. Mussolini's parents did not like the idea of sending him to a clerical institution, but there was no lay college within reach. Besides, if its teachers were at all like the saint of Savoy, Francis De Sales, author of *The Devout Life* (still read), after whom the college is named, they had nothing to fear.

Early in October of the year 1892 preparations were being made for Mussolini's de-

Photo. A. Miserocchi, Forli

MUSSOLINI'S FATHER AND MOTHER

parture. This fact disturbed him not a little, for he regarded the college as a kind of prison, and so he says in his autobiography as told by Rossato: "The week preceding my departure I was more of a *Monello* (a little rogue) than ever. I was out of doors all day roaming in the fields and by the rivulets, and in the vineyards (it was vintage time), eating bunches of ripe grapes. The day before that fixed for my setting off, I had a fight with a companion, but a blow I aimed at his head hit a wall and flayed my knuckles, so I had to leave home with my hand *'fasciata'* (bandaged)."

On the morning of the 15th of the month he, with his father, set out for Faenza in a small, two-wheeled cart drawn by a donkey. They were hardly out of sight of their home when the donkey stumbled and fell, nearly throwing Mussolini over its head. *"Brutto segno!"* the father exclaimed; however, they soon got the donkey on its feet again and resumed their journey. In the afternoon they reached the college and were admitted. The director seems to have been struck with the appearance of the young Mussolini, for, after gazing at him intently for some minutes, he turned to his father and exclaimed:

"He must be a vivacious fellow." Before leaving, his father embraced and kissed his son, who, as soon as the big door was closed between them, could restrain himself no longer and burst into tears.

What the curriculum of study was in this Salesian college we have no means of knowing. Probably it did not differ materially from that of other boarding schools, although, being clerical, certain subjects were bound to be proscribed. One thing is certain, his studies did not change his character, or even modify his pugnacious temperament, for he was soon at his old habits, quarrelling and fighting with his fellow-scholars, and getting severely punished. Notwithstanding his violent volcanic character, he was full of humour and rarely lost his self-control; but, unhappily, now he did. Fighting with a big boy who had insulted him, Mussolini gave him what the Italians call a *temperinata,* that is to say, he drew his *temperino* (penknife) and wounded him. This was too serious a matter even for corporal punishment, and so Mussolini was expelled from the school.

Notwithstanding this adventure, he was soon admitted to another college which existed exclusively for the training of teachers;

this was at Forinpopoli, a place not far distant from Faenza. Here he soon made the kettle boil both for teachers and scholars. On one occasion he was set upon by three of his fellow-students. He beat them off, but in doing so, as Bonavita tells us, "he had gone beyond legitimate defence," and he fled from the college. The director, who was a brother of the poet Giosuè Carduci, wrote to his father to take him home. Afterwards, he consented to take him back because he was the cleverest student he had, and on that account did honour to the institution. However, neither he nor his assistants were sorry when Mussolini's course of study was completed and he left the school, having obtained his diploma as a teacher. Between these two colleges he had spent six years in study, from his ninth to his fifteenth year, from 1892 to 1898.

He then returned home to Dovia, drawn thither by a son's love for his mother. No doubt he fully realized how much he owed to her prayers, wise counsels, gentle admonition and careful training. Her health, never robust, had become somewhat delicate and precarious. His stay at home was a somewhat prolonged one, lasting four years, from 1898

to 1902. Indeed, he may have wished to remain longer for his mother's sake, for, the secretaryship of the commune of Predappio becoming vacant, he applied for the post, which, however, was given to another. If he was disappointed, his father was not, for he now seems to have had a presentiment of his son's future greatness, such as his mother and Mussolini himself had felt years before, for he said to him: "This is no place for you, my son. Go out into the world. In one way or another, with Predappio or without Predappio, you will be the Crispi of tomorrow." This was a remarkable prophecy, for it foretold not only of his becoming a statesman, but of his becoming a supreme leader amongst statesmen, such as Crispi was. I remember well Mr. Joseph Chamberlain once saying to me: "Of all the Italian statesmen of Crispi's time, Crispi was the one who, above all, commanded the respect and confidence of the British Government."

Mussolini then sought and, after a somewhat prolonged search, obtained a situation as a teacher in an elementary school at Quartieri Emilia, a small place on the River Po, not far from Parma. And now begins a new era of interest and adventure in his life.

II

MUSSOLINI, THE DAY-LABOURER

"What is your coat-of-arms?" "A pair of shirt-sleeves."

—American President.

II

MUSSOLINI, THE DAY-LABOURER

MANY in Italy, both young men and young women, take their diploma as teachers with little or no intention of adopting teaching as a profession. Mussolini was one of that number. He was not fitted, either in mind or in temperament, for such a career. So the situation that he obtained as a teacher he held but for a brief time. It was only an episode in his life, introductory to his adventurous wanderings as a day-labourer.

As I have already said in the previous chapter, the school in which he taught was an elementary one, at Quartieri Emilia, a small place on the River Po, not far from Parma. He had a class of some forty little children to look after, whom he found quiet and obedient. I have no doubt his presence would secure that. He taught four hours a day, from nine o'clock till one, which are the

hours of an elementary school teacher at the present time. His pay was fifty-six *lire* per month. This was not a big pay, but everything was cheap then. For his board and lodging he paid only forty *lire* a month.

He had thus a lot of time on his hands, and a little spare cash in his pocket. At first he did not know what to do with himself, for idleness is foreign to his nature. He told a friend of mine lately that he worked eight hours a day, but it was from 8 A. M. till 8 P. M. He works much longer than that, too. However, he soon made acquaintances and devoted himself to work and play. He read many books, he learned to draw, to paint a little, to fence, to sing, and to dance. He entered heartily into all the village games and danced to his heart's content at all the public balls, both on weekday and Sunday. In fact, he had rather a gay time. But this interlude in his life was, as I have already said, of short duration, for, when the scholastic season closed at the end of June, he threw up his post in order to begin his wanderings. As he left the school, his last words to his pupils were, "Perseverance wins success."

Mussolini then made up his mind to go into

Photo. Porry-Pastorel, Rome

MUSSOLINI PLOUGHING ON HIS FARM

Switzerland. Rossato quotes him as saying in his autobiography: "I telegraphed to my mother to send me the money necessary for the journey, and she sent me by telegraph the forty-five *lire*. On the evening of July the 9th, 1902, I stopped at Chiasso (the frontier town near Como). As I waited for the train to carry me into the centre of Switzerland I bought a newspaper, the *Secolo*. What was my surprise and grief to find in it a notice of the arrestment of my father. He, with some other Socialists, had smashed to pieces the election urns at Predappio and Orte to prevent the Clericals gaining a victory. This news placed me in a dilemma. Should I go back or go on? I decided to continue my journey, and the next day (July 10th), in the afternoon, I arrived at Yverdon with two *lire* and ten *centessime* in my pocket. But I did not care, I wished to see, to work, to study, to knock about topsy-turvy in the world."

Yverdon, Mussolini's first stopping-place in Switzerland, is at the south end of the lake of Neuchatel. It is a small town of some 10,000 inhabitants, famous for its sulphur springs. As we learn from a private letter of Mussolini's published by Mme. Sarfatti,

he stayed here but one week. It was, however, an eventful week for him, for it initiated him into work of which he was yet to have his fill, namely, that of a builder's labourer. On this occasion he says in the letter I have just mentioned, "The muscles of my arms were swollen, wheeling stones in a barrow up to the second floor of a building." No wonder they were so, for there was no working day of eight hours then. His pay was about three *lire* a day, which was a little higher than that of a labourer in Italy.

Having completed his week, he went back on his steps, taking a train on the morning of Sunday, the 20th of July, 1902, to Lausanne, which lies some twenty odd miles south of Yverdon and which he passed through without stopping, on his way north. Mussolini does not seem to have found work very readily at Lausanne, and apparently left the city to tramp the country round in search of it. Before he found it he was reduced to great straits, for we find him not only asking from one person and another for a little money help, but also being reduced, by a thirty-six hours' hunger, to the necessity of begging for a piece of bread. Rossato gives us an example of this. He tells us that one night he

saw a family at supper in the courtyard of a house. He hesitated for a moment, then he boldly entered and asked, "Have you any bread?" There was a dead silence. "Give me a piece." Still no answer. Then the man slowly picked up a bit from the table and offered it to him. Mussolini took it and said, "Thank you," but still there was no answer, so he turned on his heel and went out into the night. His first impulse was to throw the bread away, and he actually raised his arm to do so, but slowly it was lowered till the bread reached his mouth; then he ate it greedily, still tramping on.

I saw that the other day, when he was enjoying his morning ride, a little girl, lurking by the roadside, came towards him. He stopped his horse and asked her what she wanted. She said that her father had been killed in the War and her mother was in abject poverty. He gave her a hundred *lire* note, took her name and address and said that he would inquire into her case. He found the little girl's story true, and so awarded her mother a pension.

Bye and bye Mussolini found work similar to what he did at Yverdon, namely, to be a mason's, or in this case, a bricklayer's la-

bourer. He was set to mix lime and to carry it and bricks up the scaffold gradients to the builders. His wages were two and a half *francs* a day. How long he remained at this job we do not know, but after a time we find him back again at Lausanne.

In several newspapers published throughout Italy in the month of March of this year, 1927, there was a short article entitled, "An Episode in the Life of Mussolini When He Was a Day-labourer in Lausanne." The episode is told by a retired builder, now an old man resident at Bergamo, called Pietro Nave. When Mussolini was wandering about Lausanne in search of work, this master-builder was erecting some houses. "One morning," he tells us, "my wife was returning home from the market, where she had been shopping, when she met, on a bridge, a young man dressed in grey clothes, who asked her: 'Are you not an Italian?' She answered: 'No, I am a Bergamasco' (Bergamo is an Italian town in Lombardy, some thirty-six miles northeast of Milan).

"At this answer the young man smiled and said: 'My good woman, I am seeking work; could you not direct me to

some fellow-countryman who might employ me?'

" 'Wait a minute,' she said, 'and I will call my husband.' The husband soon appeared, and he then and there engaged the young man to start work in his service the next day, as a day-labourer.

"After a time," Pietro Nave says, "the young man began to write articles for the newspapers and to give private lessons." Pietro Nave remembers the young labourer's name, Benito Mussolini, for he was impressed, and so was his wife, with his appearance, and because, unlike all the other labourers in his employment, he was the only one who did not frequent the taverns. Pietro Nave wrote his recollection of this episode in a letter which he sent to Commendatore Chiavolino, Mussolini's private secretary, who showed it to his master. Mussolini said, "I remember perfectly well all that Pietro Nave has written." He was never ashamed of honest work, as no one need ever be. Indeed, at this time he used to sign his letters thus, " Benito Mussolini, Muratore."

Mussolini seems to have remained in the employment of Pietro Nave for a considerable time. But this was not what he came to

Switzerland to do, for, as he said at Yverdon, "I wished to see, to study, to work, and to knock about topsy-turvy in the world." Accordingly, one fine morning he threw the sack, which he wore on his shoulders to save his coat from being too much stained by the red bricks, into a ditch and set out once more on the tramp. He seems to have gone down to the west bank of the Lake of the Four Cantons, for, bye and bye, we find him at Geneva. But before reaching this city, he must have had many hardships and many adventures.

Perhaps a story that Arturo Rossato tells belongs to this period. He says that as Mussolini tramped solitarily along he overtook a Russian. This Russian had a bundle of books under his arm and an alarm-clock in his hand. He was a fine-looking man, and Mussolini felt friendly towards him. After exchanging names he said, "Why do you carry that clock?" "Because I have no place to put it." Mussolini said, "They may suspect you to be a thief." The Russian quietly put the clock on the ground, took out his pocketbook and showed Mussolini a visiting-card on which was printed, "Student in Philosophy," "Doctor in Medicine," "Doctor in

Law," and "Professor of Belles-Lettres." The two warmly shook hands and resumed their walk. But, as we have already seen, little things, such as the varied sounds and sights at church ceremonies, annoy Mussolini, so at this time did the ticking of the Russian's clock. At last he said, "Dear friend, you have not a penny, nor have I. You do not know where you are going, no more do I. However, I have nothing in my hands. You have that alarm-clock, which, my dear friend, may land us all in prison (*tutti i tre,* all three of us). A policeman would never believe that two gentlemen such as we are, who have not a place to lay our heads, could have come honestly by such a piece of luxury. Therefore, my dear friend, either throw into a ditch your alarm-clock, or I must say good-bye. It is best in this way to prevent our awakening tomorrow morning in prison, under the accusation of theft. Is that right?"

His Russian friend did not think so. After a minute he held out his hand to Mussolini and said, *"Addio."* *"Addio,"* answered Mussolini, "what is the time?" "A quarter to nine." "Thanks, I hope your clock is right. Good luck to you." *"Buon viaggio"*

(a good journey), answered the Russian. And so they parted; Mussolini, striding on ahead, entered the city first and took one street, and the Russian, following behind him with the alarm-clock in his hand, took another.

Mussolini had been on his feet all day, and so, being tired, he began to think of going to bed. But where could he find one? Coming to a bridge over the dry bed of a torrent, he thought he might pass the night under the arch. Accordingly, leaving the road, he settled himself there to sleep. But it was not to be. Again small sounds began to disturb him. Amongst the stones were frogs, and they began to croak, and this annoyed him. Then flies and midges came buzzing round his head and annoyed him still more. And so, looking around to find another bed-room, he spied a large wooden packing-case at a typographer's door. Going up to it and seeing that it was empty, he said to himself, "Here is my bed." He got into it and was soon fast asleep. In the morning when he awoke and looked up, his eyes met those of a policeman gazing at him. Then, Signor Rossato tells us, the following conversation took place:

Policeman—"What are you doing here?"

Mussolini—"I was just thinking of getting up."

Policeman—"Then get up quickly, I have been waiting here till you woke."

Mussolini—"Very kind of you. Would you kindly call my valet to bring my clothes and toilet requisites?"

The policeman apparently did not enjoy the humor of Mussolini's words, and so he said gruffly to him: "Get up quickly, or I myself will help you to get up."

Mussolini—"That is precisely what I want. Give me your hand."

Policeman—"You are an Italian?"

Mussolini—"Yes, extradition department."

"Follow me."

He then got out of his box with alacrity and walked abreast of the policeman to the police station. There he was accused of *vagabondaggio* (vagabondage or vagrancy), and put into a cell. But he was not alone. In a corner sat an old man, the very embodiment of foulness, busily engaged in removing vermin from his body.

"Who are you?" he asked Mussolini, who made no reply.

"Italian, eh?"

No reply.

"A knife affair?" said the old man, insinuating that Mussolini had been apprehended for stabbing someone.

Then Mussolini put him down. "No knife, my friend. An Italian does not use a knife. He uses scissors to cut his nails and to cut his hair and to keep himself clean in his own house. *Basta* (enough)."

On obtaining his release from prison, Mussolini seems to have continued his tramp down the west side of the lake till he reached Geneva, and here we must leave him, not that his wanderings in Switzerland are over. Indeed, they have only begun, for we are only at the close of the year 1902, and we find him there in 1904, and his career during this latter period was more adventurous than ever, for he roamed the country not only as a mason's labourer, but also as a propagandist of revolutionary principles, promoting strikes and insurrections and getting into all kinds of troubles, having to flee from one canton to another, and several times suffering arrest and imprisonment, and finally expelled from the country altogether, and all this for the purpose, as he then honestly thought, of bettering the conditions of the working classes.

From "The Populo d' Italia"

"ROMANO," 4 MONTHS OLD, THIRD SON OF MUSSOLINI

I saw lately that the Swiss Confederation had erased from their State Records the decree of Mussolini's expulsion.

In Switzerland, where the winter is very severe, the building trade is brought to a standstill. Mussolini then turned his spare time to the best account by attending university classes and those of evening schools. However, Mussolini went one better than other day-labourers, for he did not entirely abandon manual work. He would sometimes find employment as a shop-keeper's porter or message-boy, when he would carry parcels of goods to the merchant's customers on his broad shoulders, or in a basket slung over his arm, or, if the goods were heavy and the houses distant, in a hand barrow. The money he thus earned helped to pay his class fees and his board. I may here say that, when attending classes at the University of Lausanne, Mussolini was particularly struck with the lectures of an Italian professor, Dr. Vilfredo Pareto. He seems to have profited largely by them and to have acquired his professor's good will and friendship. Mussolini never forgot either his teacher or his teaching, for when, in 1922, he became the Head of the Italian Government, on his suggestion, King

Victor Emmanuel III. made Professor Vilfredo Pareto a Senator of the Kingdom.

Besides tramping about Switzerland, Mussolini also found his way into Germany, and at another time he travelled in France and resided for some time there. He had studied French and German in Switzerland, but by the travels just spoken of he acquired a more real knowledge of these languages. He has also studied English and knows it sufficiently well to carry on a brief conversation.

Mussolini is a man of versatile genius, and so his knocking about from place to place amongst men of various nationalities and of different social grades, his untiring diligence, and his devotion to reading and study, account for his extensive knowledge and accomplishments, and his marvellous command of language.

III

MUSSOLINI, THE JOURNALIST

"Journalism is for us not an occupation, but a mission."

—MUSSOLINI.

III

MUSSOLINI, THE JOURNALIST

IN the year 1905, Mussolini's wanderings as a day-labourer came to an end, for then he was again drawn home by the love of a son for his mother. The good, gentle Rosa died that year, a young woman, for she was only forty-six years of age. Mussolini was a child of many prayers. Perhaps her last prayer for him may have been like this:

"O kindly bless my dear boy left alone in this ill world; I never more may look upon his face, may never hear his voice. Thou knowest him well, for every morning, long before the lark sang at Thy shining doors, my prayer arose to crave Thy blessing on his restless youth," and for herself, though young in years, she may have said:

" It is the evening of my day of life.
I have been working from the early dawn;
Am sore and weary. Oh! smile on me.
The world and I have done; with humble spirit
I sit down at Thy glorious gates, and wait
Till death shall lead me in."

She was buried in the little churchyard of Varano di Predappio, a spot ever afterwards sacred to her son. Her death, as he has told us, was a terrible blow to him, and writing to a friend, who had sent him a message of affection and sympathy, he also said, "Now it only remains to me to follow the counsels of my mother and to do honour to her memory by fulfilling all my duties as her son and an Italian citizen."

Soon afterward he did what was the best thing he could do in his sore bereavement, he took himself a wife, one of his own class, now known as Donna Rachele, and started housekeeping for himself in a *vecchio casolare* similar to the one in which he was born twenty-two years before. He was very poor, for we are told that he had to buy a second-hand cradle for a few *lire* for his firstborn, Edda. No wonder he was poor, for the situation he had found, that of secretary to the "Socialist House of Labour" at Forli, only brought him 125 *lire* per month. A member of the Socialist party proposed to raise it to two hundred *lire* a week, but Mussolini refused, observing good-humoredly that he "hoped, with the pay he had, to open a savings bank account."

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MUSSOLINI TAKING A REST

As we learn from the letter of the Lausanne master builder quoted in the preceding chapter, Mussolini, whilst in his service as a day-labourer, began writing articles for certain newspapers, and so now we find him taking up journalism as a profession. On New Year's day, 1910, he started, at Forli, a small weekly paper called the *La Lotta di Classe*. This was the first of three which he founded, besides a fourth which he edited. All four owed their success to his pen. As the name of this small weekly newspaper suggests, it was exclusively devoted to class warfare, namely, that of the proletariat against the capitalist, of the occupier against the proprietor, and of the servant against the master. Unfortunately, this fratricidal war has become chronic in some countries and is too common everywhere. Perhaps the only country that is now free from it is Italy. What a marvellous thing it is that this social peace, this recognition of a common brotherhood of all classes, with which Italy is now blessed, is due to him who, for years, by speech and writing, did more than any other man to frustrate it, namely, Mussolini.

Whilst acting as secretary for the "Social-

ist House of Labour" and also carrying on the paper *La Lotta di Classe,* he began to learn to play the violin. Quite recently his music master, Archimede Montanelli, of Forli, told to the editor of the *Tribuna* newspaper the story of his pupil. I here translate from that paper the gist of the interview. He said that, on the 7th of October, 1907, Benito Mussolini came and asked him to teach him to play the violin. He rather hesitated to accede to his request, remarking that Mussolini was rather old to begin such a study (he had just entered on his twenty-fifth year). However, Mussolini insisted, and he was accepted. The violin that Mussolini possessed was not a good one for a beginner, and on Montanelli saying so, Mussolini answered that it would have to do, and that bye and bye he would get a better one. The lessons were started and were continued, without interruption, for a good many months.

During this time Montanelli learned to appreciate not only the musical talent but the vast knowledge of books and of men which his pupil possessed, for they often had long literary and political conversations. But now came a break. Mussolini did not come as usual for his lessons for several

weeks. Finally he returned. Montanelli raised his hands in astonishment, exclaiming, "At last we have met again. Kindly tell me where you have been these weeks past?" Mussolini calmly answered, "Simply in prison for some articles I had written in my newspaper." (I may here say that these articles were against the Government's proposed colonization of Lybia, and were calculated and indeed designed to excite the soldiers, who were being sent there, to mutiny.) "Nothing very serious," said Montanelli, "and you did not condescend to beg your political enemies to cancel your three weeks' imprisonment?" Mussolini answered, "He who takes the risk of fighting politically must be prepared for any event." It was on this occasion that he said to the judge, "If you absolve me, you do me a pleasure, if you condemn me, you do me an honour." Mussolini has himself said that he never found prison life intolerable, and it is certain that for him it was never a time of idleness. He always made use of it for study. It was during this imprisonment at Forli that, I believe, he wrote a short *Life of John Huss,* the Bohemian reformer and martyr, who was burned at the stake at Constance, in July,

1415. The subtitle of Mussolini's book is *The Defender of the Truth.*

Passionately fond of music, Mussolini continued to take violin lessons as long as he remained at Forli, which was till the end of the year 1910. By that time he was a proficient violinist, and this accomplishment is to him now, what it has been since those early Forli days, a recreation and an exquisite pleasure, which he often invites others to share.

At the close of 1910, Mussolini was invited to become Secretary to the Socialist Society at Trent, and also to become a co-editor, with the famous Italian hero and martyr Cesare Battisti, of their organ *Il Popolo.* This new post, which apparently Mussolini unhesitatingly accepted, was one of extreme danger, for the city of Trent (famous for the Church Council which sat there from 1546 till 1563, and more famous still for Fra Paolo Sarpi's incomparable history of that Council) belonged then to Austria. As any pre-war map shows, Austria had driven a wedge from the Brenner Pass right down the Adige Valley as far as Ala, which is only thirty-three miles north of Verona. As Trent is twenty-five miles north of Ala (fifty-eight miles

north of Verona) it was well within Austrian territory. Trent, too, was really an Austrian fortress. It had war batteries and strategical roads and railways. The city was filled with police, spies and soldiers, and every movement of Italians was watched and their plans often hampered and frustrated.

But a post of danger was for Mussolini what it was for King Emmanuel III. during the War, a post desired and coveted, and in going to Trent he knew perfectly well the risk he was running. But, as he afterwards showed to the world, he was not afraid to "beard the lion in its den" literally, so he could not be afraid to do so figuratively. A friend gave him a lion-cub and he put it in a cage where there were two grown-up lions, and daily he entered the cage to play with the cub. When he did so the two lions would come forward, one a rather surly creature, with a growl. But Mussolini never budged an inch. He would set his arms akimbo and then stare steadily at the lions till they shrank back into their corner. He would then put himself into a sitting posture, as shown in the picture, and amuse himself for quite ten minutes with the cub. When he rose to go, the lions would again come forward and once

more he would stare them out of countenance. Whether he thought he was risking his life when he bearded the lion in his den literally, I do not know, but he evidently thought he was doing so when he bearded the lion in his den figuratively, because, as he bade his father good-bye at Dovia he said: "*Sento che in Austria finero sulla forca*" (I feel that in Austria I shall finish on the scaffold)," and before his brief career in Trent was over, this presentiment of his was in imminent danger of being realized, for Mussolini was what all patriotic Italians have been for long years before this date, an ardent *irredentista* (an advocate of unredeemed Italy).

I remember seeing, as far back as the eighties, school-maps of Italy which included the Trentino and Istria (Trent and Trieste). These Austrian provinces were painted in Italian colours and written across them "unredeemed Italy." The minds of the children were thus imbued with the fact that these provinces belonged by right to Italy. They were further made to understand that the inhabitants of Trent and Trieste were practically Italians, who were excluded by Austria from all positions of trust and condemned to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water,"

and that, sooner or later, they would have to be redeemed. This was, of course, brought about by the Great War.

Mussolini, too early and too openly, advocated in the pages of *Il Popolo* and in other papers, in the face of Austria, the acquisition of these provinces, which brought him under the eye of the police. At last, when he frankly wrote *"Il vero confino Italiano non si ferma ad Ala"* (the true frontier of Italy does not end at Ala), he was arrested, imprisoned for a time, and then escorted by police agents to Ala, and so banished from Austria. This was in October, 1911; so he had been allowed only to remain in Trent some ten months.

His next journalistic adventure was to become sub-editor, and in a short time editor, of that notorious Socialistic newspaper *L'Avanti* (The Go-ahead). This newspaper is the leading Socialistic organ in Italy, and it has often been suppressed, sequestred, and its publication prohibited by the Government. Mussolini was not only its editor, but its chief contributor, and as his articles were full of nerve, courage and fire, and advocated in no uncertain way the principles of Socialism, its circulation increased from some 30,000 to

90,000, with a corresponding strengthening and widening of its influence. As usual, his writings brought him into conflict with the authorities. Mussolini addressed his adherents: "It is your right to kill when others threaten to kill you." For that, and many other revolutionary utterances, he was arrested, although soon liberated.

But now dark war clouds were gathering over Europe. "The Day" long looked forward to by Germany, and long prepared for by her, was fast approaching. And so at last, on the 2nd of August, 1914, Germany and Austria declared war.

This tragic event stirred Italy to its core and soon divided the people into three groups, each advocating its own idea as to what Italy's attitude and action ought to be regarding it.

First: There were those who advocated *Italy joining the Central Powers.* This was, as they said, because she was a member of the Triple Alliance. But that alliance had been forced on Italy, besides which, Austria, by making war on Servia, which she did on the 24th of July, 1914, without consulting Italy, had really annulled it. So this idea found few adherents. Mussolini, in the columns

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MUSSOLINI AS PRIME MINISTER

of *L'Avanti,* vigorously opposed it, knowing that it would ultimately lead to a revolution which he himself was ready to guide.

Secondly: There were those who advocated *Absolute Neutrality.* Mussolini, at first, in common with the pro-German Premier, Giolitti (afterwards discovered to be intriguing with Buelow, the German Ambassador at Rome), and with other members of the Government, and with all the Communists, Socialists and Pacifists in Italy, embraced the idea and became one of its principal supporters. But before long, as he began to realize that not only the interests of Italy, but also of Europe and of humanity were at stake, he promptly repudiated the idea of neutrality and left that group, although it was far larger and far more influential than the first mentioned one, having, as I have said, the support (not of the King by any means, quite the reverse), but of the Premier Giolitti and to a large extent of the Government.

Thirdly: There were those who advocated *Entering the War* on one side of the *Allies.* This section outnumbered by ten to one the other two parties put together, for it included the people who were the backbone of the nation, and this section Mussolini

now joined. He at once severed his connection with *L'Avanti.* He had crossed the Rubicon. He took this step solitarily and alone, so far as his friends, the Socialists, were concerned. Indeed, all of them became his fierce, implacable, unscrupulous and cruel enemies. All kinds of vile epithets were hurled at him, such as turncoat, deceiver, betrayer, traitor; but he remained firm, resolute and unmoved.

At last, at a great Socialistic Congress held in Milan on the 25th of November, 1914, he was required to give up his *tessera* as a Socialist, and was formally and officially expelled from the order. Mussolini was present. They tried to prevent his speaking, but he told them they were unjust in doing so, for there was no civil judge who did not allow the accused person to make his defence, and so, in spite of all their hooting and yelling, he did make an eloquent speech. Amongst other things, he told them they were short-sighted, even in their own interests, to oppose the war and Italy's intervention in it, for if Prussian militarism won the day, then Socialism would be suffocated. He even commanded their applause when he said that, in 1814, Waterloo was fought, when the crown

of a tyrant was hurled in the dust, and that in 1914 probably another crown of another tyrant would be broken to pieces when liberty would be saved, and a new era opened in the world's history.

Mussolini accepted with perfect equanimity his expulsion, and when condoled with on his misfortune, he replied, "Notwithstanding all this, I feel that God has destined me for great things." He is a man of faith, and so bound to succeed. He very soon showed this, for, to the astonishment of his former friends and, as I have just said, his implacable enemies, he anticipated the next issue of *L'Avanti* by the issue of a new paper of his own, which he called *Il Popolo d'Italia* (The People of Italy), a paper I have long subscribed for; indeed, as I write, today's issue is lying on my table before me. Lenin felt Mussolini's loss tremendously. He is reported to have said, "He was the strong man who would have conducted our party to victory. Losing him, you have lost the winning card."

Mussolini did well in naming his newspaper *Il Popolo d'Italia,* for it was an appeal to the people against the Government and their Bolshevist and Socialist allies. Into

this newspaper he threw all his wonderfully good judgment, energy and literary power. He could not convert the enemies of intervention in the War on the side of the Allies, but he could more and more discredit them, and rouse the people against them. Day by day articles appeared from his pen explaining the nature of the War and the tremendous issues that were at stake, and calling for Italy's intervention and irredentism. Speaking in March, 1915, Mussolini said: "If the Government has not realized the inevitable necessity of intervention, the people have done so, and they will overthrow the government."

At last Mussolini succeeded in his war propaganda. As he had foreseen, the people would not be restrained. In every city throughout the country, men marched with the tri-coloured flags shouting: *"Italia Irredenta!" "Avanti Savoia, si vince o si moia!" "Morte a Giolitti, Morte a Giolitti!"* Enthusiastic meetings were held in favour of intervention, but all seemed in vain. Giolitti and the Government remained deaf to all appeals and obstinate in their opposition to the War. They even went so far as to order the war meetings being held in Rome to be broken up by the police. But at last they had

to face the alternative either of yielding to the popular cry or to be turned out of office. They chose the former, and so, on the ever-memorable day, May 24th, 1915, Italy proclaimed war on Austria, and then on Germany, and joined the Allies.

Before proceeding further with my narrative, let me pause to take a look at the workshops and the machinery and the workers who, in six short months from November, 1914, till May, 1915, were chiefly responsible for the bringing about of this intervention of such a moment for England, for the Allies and for Italy herself.

Mr. Ruskin has said, speaking of churches and of the uses they are meant to serve: "We must widely shun the thought that the magnificence of the temple can materially add to the efficiency of the worship or to the power of the ministry. If one has a message to deliver, it will lose nothing of its power if delivered in a barn or in the open air." The humble office of the *Popolo d'Italia* confirms and illustrates Mr. Ruskin's words. It was situated in a side street in Milan, called *Vic Paolo di Cannobio.* On the the ground floor were the printing presses, and on the first floor the editorial department, which con-

sisted of three rooms, neither very large nor particularly well lighted. One room had no door, but over the opening were displayed conspicuously the words, "Please shut the door." These rooms must have presented a curious and an attractive sight. The sub-editors were all young men, like Mussolini himself, full of life, energy and go, regardless of all formalism and conventionality. When Mussolini engaged them they were never asked to show certificates of birth and baptism, of school and college attendance, not even of good conduct. He set them to work. If they proved capable, it was all right; if not, it was "*Egregio Amico* (good friend), you and I must part." They were a happy family, working together merrily, often in their shirt-sleeves if the rooms were hot and stuffy, or, as Rossato tells us, who was one of them, "to show that we had shirts." Rossato tells us some curious stories about them. Mussolini, entering the office one cold night with the collar of his coat turned up, his soft hat crushed in and stained with dust, and his hands in his pockets, saw a young fellow writing at a table. "What good things are you doing there?" Mussolini asked.

"Writing."

"I see that, and then?"

"I do not know," was the answer; "have you something for me to do?"

"I have, but first of all, who are you?"

"I-I'm one of your sub-editors, and I have been two months in the office."

Mussolini: "We need say no more, if you are one of my sub-editors. You may be so. Nothing is impossible."

One evening another sub-editor appeared at Mussolini's door over which was written in big letters, "*He who enters, honours me. He who does not enter gives me pleasure.*" This man entered. He wished to consult him about a political article he was going to write. Mussolini looked up rather gloomily. The sub-editor began: "Listen! The article that I—"

He got no further, for Mussolini interrupted him, saying: "Your article! I have read it, and it does not please me."

"But," exclaimed the lad, rather upset, "I have not yet written the article."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mussolini, " that rather alters things, but, all the same, I do not like it." And he resumed his writing.

Indeed, Mussolini never liked to be disturbed when writing. When so occupied he

often walked about, talked to himself, got angry, even furious, and when in that state, he had sometimes to relieve his mind by using bad language. Rossato tells a story which shows how he resented interruption. On his writing-table there lay a big revolver of twenty rounds and a large hunting-knife, with its sharp, gleaming, steel blade showing, whilst on his ink-stand there was a small revolver. One evening he rang for the office errand boy. Mussolini: "Bring me a cup of coffee. No one must enter here. The first that enters I will shoot." In a minute or two the errand boy returned, knocked at the door and entering, said: "I am bringing you the coffee." "I will shoot you," shouted Mussolini. The boy, terrified, turned on his heel, was out of the room like a shot, banged the door and fled. What became of the coffee nobody knows.

Another incident mentioned by Rossato is particularly pleasing, because it brings out the fact that neither Mussolini nor his staff regarded wages as the motive and the end of work. They worked from a sense of duty and of love to their fellow-men and to their country, looking on their wages as only a means of helping them to go on doing thus.

The incident is as follows: One day Mussolini had hardly any money, so he called Rossato and said: "Today you ought to be paid your stipend, but I have not a penny to give you." *"Benissimo,"* was the answer (that is all right). "Yes, you say, that is all right, but understand I can give you nothing, for the little money I have must be given to the typographers and messengers. They must be paid." But, when such a thing happened, there was no grumbling amongst the staff. They were all quite content to wait, and went on happily with their work.

Such was the workshop, and such were the workers with whom to a large extent belongs the credit of bringing about Italy's intervention in the War on the 24th of May, 1915. As soon as that took place Mussolini volunteered his services, leaving the editorship of the *Popolo d'Italia* in the hands of his brother Arnaldo, who still continues to conduct it in the same place. His services, however, were not accepted, as the "class" of recruits to which he belonged had not been called up. He was much disappointed, all the more so that the Socialists took advantage of the fact to publish all kinds of calumnies against him, saying he urged Italy to enter

the War, and that now she has done so, he himself would not go to the front. After a little more than three months' time, that is, on the 31st of August, 1915, his "class," that of the 1884 levy, was requisitioned, and he at once entered as a common soldier in the Eleventh Regiment of the *Bersaglieri* (sharp-shooters), in which regiment he had served as a conscript in 1905, that is, ten years previously.

IV

MUSSOLINI, THE SOLDIER

"If I advance, follow me! If I retreat, kill me! If I am killed, avenge me!"

—MUSSOLINI.

IV

MUSSOLINI, THE SOLDIER

IT is impossible to exaggerate the terrible task that Italy undertook when she entered the War on the 24th of May, 1915, nor to exaggerate the terrible risk she ran. She had the Austrians to the right of her and to the left of her, on the eastern border of northern Italy and on its western border. On the eastern border they held part of Cornia and of the Corso, Gorizia and the Isonzo Valley, and on the western border they held Trent and the Valley of the Adige. Then on both of these borders Austria, like Germany, had been preparing for war during long years before 1914. Trent, of which I had occasion to speak in a former chapter, was practically a huge military depot, for it was surrounded by posts well garrisoned with Austrian soldiers and it had strategic roads and lines running in all directions. Gorizio was similarly fortified, and so was the country around it almost up to the Iudrio stream, which was the

dividing line between Italy and Austria, whilst batteries of guns were concealed on the mountain slopes and peaks around. Besides which the upland plateau there, on which the chief battles had to be fought, is a wild, barren, treeless, waterless, trackless region, full of boulders and caverns. It is the most forbidding country I have ever seen.

The Italian people knew all that when, led by Mussolini and a few others, they forced a pusillanimous government to enter the War, and they were prepared to face it, and did face it so determinedly and courageously (though at a tremendous cost) that more than they had ever dared to hope for was realized. *Italia Irredenta,* east and west, was not only acquired, but the boundaries of Italy were extended even beyond those Dante had marked out for her six centuries ago. To this glorious result Mussolini contributed not a little on the field of battle, but still more when, as a wounded soldier, forbidden to handle any longer sword or gun, he once more took up his pen. By that weapon, through the columns of the *Popolo d'Italia,* he really accomplished more for Italy and the Allies than he could have done though he had led, as a general, a regiment on the field of battle.

Photo. Porry-Pastorel, Rome

MUSSOLINI ON THE BATTLEFIELD

As I said at the close of the former chapter, the "class" of recruits to which Mussolini belonged, namely, that of 1884, was called up on the 31st of August, 1915, when he enlisted as a common soldier in the Eleventh Regiment of the *Bersaglieri* (sharpshooters). By the middle of September he was not only in the trenches, but had traversed with his company, amid snow and ice and intense cold (the thermometer being below zero), the wild, inhospitable region of the Corso, and had crossed the frontier Iudrio stream, already mentioned, and was fighting to his intense joy, on Austrian territory. Being a born fighter, he was in his element on the field of battle, all the more so that he realized, as few did, the tremendous issues that were at stake, not only for Italy, but also for Europe and humanity.

He had now been fighting for about six months when a gratifying incident took place. His captain rewarded his self-sacrificing valour by making him a corporal. Writing in his war diary on the 29th of February, 1916, he says, as quoted by Antonio Beltramelli: "Tomorrow I shall have *Igalloni di corporale* (the stripes of a corporal)." The captain proposed it in the following

words: "For an exemplary activity, lofty *Bersagliere* spirit, a serenity of mind, always first in every undertaking of work and of daring, heedless of every discomfort, zealous and scrupulous in the fulfilment of his duties."

The great aim of the Italian army was to get across the Isonza River and so reach and take Gorizia, which was the capital of the province and the headquarters of the Austrian army. The taking of this city, besides being a fatal blow to Austria, would open to the Italians the road to Trieste. Two bridges crossed the Isonza, an iron one which carried the railway and a stone one which carried the road. Both of these bridges, however, the Austrians had destroyed. Then, beyond the Isonza and the town of Gorizia were certain low hills. The summits and sides of these bristled with Austrian cannon. The enemy thus commanded the river, and any attempt to cross it was met by a withering fire. They, therefore, believed that Gorizia could not be taken. Yet the Italians completely outwitted them. How they did this was explained to me by Miss Clara L. Murray (Nurse Ray), who was on the spot with the British Red Cross Hospital.

On the Italian side of the Isonza River there were also some low hills, just as there were on the Austrian side, only these, instead of being some distance from the river, were quite close to it, and their eastern slopes ran down to the water's edge.

Under cover of the night the Italians carried to the top of these hills materials for the construction of a pontoon bridge. These were carefully concealed from view under heaps of brushwood. They then, working still by night, laid several lines of runners from the hilltop down to the river. They also planted powerful searchlights exactly opposite the Austrian guns.

On the night fixed for the crossing of the Isonza, the Italians suddenly flashed on their brilliant searchlights, which completely blinded the Austrian gunners. Then they ran their pontoons down the hillside to the river, hastily erected their bridge, and before the morning dawned, thousands of Italian soldiers, with their ordnance, had crossed into Austrian territory, and were marching on Gorizia. Meanwhile, other Italian soldiers, lower down the stream at Sagrada, where the river was broad but only a few feet deep, forded it, holding their muskets high above

their heads and shouting *"Abasso l'Austria! Viva, Viva l'Italia!"* Gorizia was soon reached, stormed and captured. This heroic feat was accomplished on the 6th of August, 1916. The enterprise cost the Italians 20,000 men, but the enemy lost, in killed and prisoners, many thousands more.

I have had occasion in earlier chapters to speak of Mussolini's innate generosity. The War afforded many illustrations of it. The following is one such. During an intense night bombardment of the trenches in which were Mussolini and his company, they were all ordered to take shelter. Mussolini happened to see a soldier who had his arm shattered by a piece of shrapnel. He at once put him into his own place of safety, covered him with his night-blanket, and then exposed himself to further risks of wounds and death by going some distance to get a glass of water, for which the poor man was urgently calling.

Besides voluntary exposures to danger at the call of brotherly kindness, Mussolini naturally shared in common with all soldiers, dangers at the call of duty, and being now a sergeant and a leader, he was foremost in all perilous enterprises. He climbed the steep mountain sides to snipe the enemy at still

higher altitudes. Naturally, he had many hairbreadth escapes from wounds and death. Of these he speaks in no tone of boasting, but calmly and quietly, in his diary. One such is the following: An Austrian bomb fell and exploded within ten feet of where he stood. The earth naturally was torn up, a tree fell and the air was filled with splinters of wood, iron, stones and earth, and Mussolini and his companions were buried in the débris. His gun was broken, his clothes were torn and his face was covered with earth. The major gave orders to his company to retire, and, seeing Mussolini in this condition, asked, "What has happened, sergeant?" He then told him the story, when the major congratulated him on his narrow escape.

Mussolini had now been in the trenches some eighteen months, from September, 1915, till February, 1917, excepting for two short leaves of absence which had been granted him in December, 1915, and November, 1916. During all this time, though exposed constantly to danger and suffering the usual hardships and privations of warfare, aggravated by the horrors of the Carso region, he remained practically unscathed. But now, on the 23rd of February, a terrible

accident happened. He, with others, was bombing the enemy when the mortar he was using burst. The iron splinters flew in all directions, killing some soldiers and wounding others. Mussolini was carried by the force of the explosion several yards and hurled to the ground. When rescued, he was found to be most severely wounded in several places. The pain and loss of blood were so great that, when carried off the battlefield to be laid down with other men on pallets of straw in the church of Doberdo in the Carso, he was deathly pale and showed no signs of life. As soon as it could be done, he was removed to the hospital at Ronchi, which is a small place north of Monfalcone, at the head of the Gulf of Trieste. Here, under tender nursing, consciousness and life gradually returned.

In his diary, Mussolini has told us more than once how certain sounds and sights annoyed him, the ticking of a clock, the croaking of a frog, the buzzing of insects, and, as I have already mentioned, when he went, as a boy, to church with his mother, he could scarcely sit out the service because of the flickering of the lights, the smell of incense, the drawling singing of the people and the

sounds of the organ, and now his experience in the hospital at Ronchi furnishes us with another illustration of this idiosyncrasy. Rossato tells us a poor soldier lay dying in the next bed to that of Mussolini's. A priest came with an alcolyte to give him the last rites of the church—to administer the *viaticum*. The alcolyte carried a small bell which he rang as they approached the bed and at certain parts of the service. Mussolini bore the tinkling for a while, then, losing patience, raised himself a little in the bed, though in pain and high fever, and cried out, to the consternation of the priest, alcolyte, nurses and patients, *"Basta telefono"* (enough telephone).

And now, on the 18th of March, when Mussolini had been about a month in the hospital, a lamentable and disgraceful disaster took place. Notwithstanding that the Red Cross flag was floating over the hospital, the Austrians bombed it. At first their shells fell short of it, but at last one found it, carrying away an angle of the building. An order was given to remove the patients to another hospital further back from the line. But the medical men found that Mussolini was not in a condition to be moved, as he had

a very high temperature and was feeble and suffering. He was the only patient so ill, and there was nothing to be done but to leave him in the shattered building with his nurse and doctor. Many of his fellow-soldiers came to see him, and when the fever had somewhat abated and he had recovered a little strength, to Mussolini's surprise and delight, there came to see him the *"First soldier of Italy," "The Chief of the Military Staff,"* His sovereign, King Victor Emmanuel III. The king, who knew Mussolini even before Italy entered into the War, going to his bedside, asked him how he was.

"Not very well, your Majesty," was Mussolini's answer.

Then the medical attendant told the king about his case—how he had a very high fever, but that now all the iron splinters that had lodged in his body, especially in his legs, which were severely wounded, had been extracted, and that now his temperature was nearly normal. The king then expressed his sympathy for him in his suffering, and praised highly his valour, telling him that his captain had spoken in warm terms of his enthusiasm, bravery and endurance. When the king left, as Arlando Danese tells us, he

turned to the aide-de-camp who was with him and said, "*Ecco un uomo che farà molto strada,*" literally, "Behold a man who will make a long road," or, as we would say, "There is a man who will make his way in the world. We shall hear of him again." King Victor Emmanuel III. here showed a knowledge of men and a foresight worthy of his grandfather, Il Re Galantuomo, indeed, I may say, worthy of Count Camillo Covour. I have no doubt Victor Emmanuel III. would recall his wounded soldier and his own prophetic words when he invited him to be his Prime Minister five years later.

Udine is a small town in Friuli, about eighty miles northeast of Venice and about twenty miles from the Austrian frontier. It was the headquarters of the army staff (the *Commando Supremo*). During the War King Victor Emmanuel III. occupied a small villa at Turriaco, just outside it. Towards the end of March, Mussolini was considered well enough to be removed to the hospital at Udine, and then, in April, he was taken to Milan, not, however, to his house there, but to the Red Cross hospital. He was visited daily by his wife and children and by friends, but it was not until August that he

was able to leave it, though on crutches, for his own home.

Early in September, Mussolini once more occupied his post as editor of the *Popolo d'Italia.* Bissolati had once, long before this time, sent a letter to him to throw down the pen and pick up the sword, but Bissolati failed then to realize that the pen is not unfrequently the more powerful and efficient weapon. When, after the Austrian War, the representatives of the powers met in Paris, 1856, to discuss the terms of peace, Lord Clarendon, the British representative, said that the speeches and the written notes of Count Cavour did more to discredit Austria and weaken her hold on Italy than any victory over her on the field of battle could have done. So it was now. As I said in the beginning of this chapter, Mussolini, unable longer to handle sword or gun, accomplished more for Italy by his pen, through the columns of the *Popolo d'Italia,* than he could have done even had he commanded a regiment on the field of battle.

However, it was no longer the Austrians that he had to fight, but, I am sorry to say, the internal enemies of Italy, who were, for the most part, his own countrymen. Bol-

shevists, Communists, Socialists, Clericals and Pacifists of all kinds, who had opposed Italy's going to war, did not stop, by any means, their evil propaganda once that event took place. They never ceased to decry the War, to call aloud for peace and to strive by every means in their power to diminish and, if possible, to destroy the warlike spirit of those at the front. That they in part succeeded in this was undeniable, for, even when Mussolini was in the field, he noticed that officers and soldiers, returning from leave of absence, were not the same keen fighters they had been before, and now he saw the open, unblushing anti-Italian actions of these men, from the Pope downwards. The Pope called the War a prolongation of useless carnage and the bulk of the priests (not all of them, for many were loyal and patriotic) echoed his words. Socialists spoke of the War as "one of exhaustion," a long-drawn-out agony. They said that "it was impossible to conquer Germany," and that "Italy was the cat's-paw of England and France," and that "next year there will be no one in the trenches." Leaflets, with such and similar words, were circulated by tens of thousands amongst the troops.

Mussolini redoubled his efforts to counteract such insidious teachings. He even did not spare the Prime Minister, Signor Orlanda, nor the Government for their worse than faint-hearted policy. A quotation from a speech he made in Rome on the 24th of February, 1918, best exhibits this lamentable condition of affairs. "Amongst other things," he said, "that whilst we who were for the War were almost denied liberty of speech, of criticism, and of protest (as we have seen War meetings were suppressed by the police), the Government permitted men in secret conventicles, in drinking dens, where they were brutalized by alcohol, and in sacristies, to prepare actions and pronounce words and phrases which assassinate the War. They court-martial and shoot a poor soldier who, perhaps, has never been taught what his country means, because he had transgressed some order. I approve of it because I believe in inflexible discipline. But there ought not to be two weights and measures, and so, if a Member of Parliament, after the disaster at Caporetto, continues to say that the War is a "useless slaughter-house," I say that such a man ought to be arrested, ought to be banished, ought to be shot. I call for a man

having courage enough, having ferocity enough to demand that such men should be shot without hesitation, all the more when they hold high positions of trust in the State. Why should I suffer; why should I die on the field of battle if, at Rome, they are still discussing whether or not they should have entered the War, if at Rome those who should guide the affairs of Italy do not yet know whether we do rightly or wrongly to fight? All this is academical talk, deplorable and criminal. And yet liberty is given to these irresponsible people to sabotage the War. We shall never go back. We must either conquer or be conquered. What is in the balance is the life or death of the nation. But Italy shall not die, for Italy is immortal."

As many wish to know what the Caporetto disaster was, I may here tell of it in few words, but let me say at once that that disaster casts no reflection on the bravery and honour of the Italian troops as a whole, although it does on a general and a certain number of soldiers of the Second Army Corps. Caporetto is the name of a village and a pass on the Isonzo River, under Mount Nero, thirty miles north of Gorizia, which, as we have seen, was in the hands of the Italians

who were there fighting their way to Trieste. It was thus the most northerly section of the Italian line, and was considered a comparatively safe place, as the Italian mountain soldiers, the *Alpini*, held Mount Nero. But it was a place of great strategic importance, for, if the enemy broke through the Italian line there, the way was open to them to rush southward on Italian territory, and so get behind the Italian troops who were fighting at Gorizia. The Italians would thus be caught between two fires, and that is exactly what happened. The Germans did break through at Caporetto, and hurried down the right or Italian bank of the Isonza. The Italian army had thus no other alternative but to retreat, before being trapped, and this they did, and not only they, but the whole civilian population, men, women and children, carrying with them what they could of their household valuables.

But how was it that the Germans were able to break through the Italian line at Caporetto? To this various answers are given. The one I have most frequently heard is, that they did not break through at all, but that the door was practically opened for them. General Luigi Cappello, who was responsible for

Photo. Eugenio Risi, Rome

MUSSOLINI WOUNDED IN RED CROSS HOSPITAL, MILAN

this section of the line, had stationed there, negligently or culpably, a number of raw, ignorant, untrained, cowardly youths from the mountains, who knew nothing of the why and wherefore of the War, and who were easily demoralized by false statements circulated amongst them by the Austrians and Germans. I have been told that there is much lead in Mount Nero, and that the Austrians, in working it, had driven a tunnel right through the mountain. By this tunnel their soldiers, but only in single file, passed through it and got behind the Italian line at Caporetto. This, too, may have been an element in the debacle. I may here say that this same general, Luigi Cappello, has had his decorations taken from him and is now undergoing a long term of imprisonment, as an accomplice of Zaniboni in his attempted assassination of Mussolini.

This Caporetto disaster next gave rise to a serious question as to the Italian line of defence. This was on the Piave River, near Traviso, but General Foch, who was in supreme command of the Allies, ordered that the Piave River should be abandoned in favour of the River Mincio, which issues from the Lago di Gardo and, after a short course

of some forty-eight miles, falls into the River Po, a little way south of Mantua. This short line of defence could be easily held. Indeed, it was the war-base of Italy against Austria in 1848-49. But to have retired to it would have left Venice and the other minor towns of Venetia, and also Verona and the other places in the province, in the hands of the Germans, which was really what they wanted, for their hope was to sack Venice. Indeed, so sure were they of doing this that they actually had a train of covered wagons across the Piave awaiting in readiness to carry off their spoils.

But this command of General Foch was rejected by everyone and, as a compromise, the Italian general staff proposed to make the River Brenta the war-base. It was now that King Victor Emmanuel III., as Commander-in-Chief of the army, stepped in and ordered that there should be no retirement, neither to the Mincio, nor to the Brenta, but that the Piave should be held at all costs. In this he was supported by General, now Lord, Plumer, who was in command of the English soldiers, who said, as was told me by one of his officers who was on the spot, that, "If the Piave war-base

is deserted I call off my soldiers and go home."

As is well known, the war-base of the Piave was valiantly held. In the Book of Judges, chapter 5, verses 20 and 21, we read that Deborah, celebrating in song the victory of the Children of Israel over the Canaanites, said, "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera. The river of Kishon, that ancient river, swept them away." And so it was here. For the Germans had built a bridge of boats across the Piave right opposite Treviso, where the river was about half a mile broad. They had also thrown several foot bridges across it further down the stream. The boat-bridge was crowded with cavalry, cannon and ammunition, and the foot-bridges with infantry, when an extraordinary thing happened, nothing less than a Providential intervention. The river came down in flood, a roaring, rushing sea, and in a moment swept the bridges, and all that were upon them, away into the Adriatic. "The River Piave, that ancient river, swept them away."

The Austrians, on the other side of the Piave, could not get across it, and those on this side, on Venetian territory, were easily

defeated, for the Italians were now supported by English and French soldiers. The defeat became a rout, the two provinces which the Austrians had overrun, Belluno and Udine, were retaken, and the ultimate result was that which I said in the beginning of this chapter, that not only was unredeemed Italy, east and west, acquired, but the boundaries of Italy were extended even beyond those Dante had marked out for her six centuries before.

V

MUSSOLINI, THE FASCIST

"There is no glory like his who saves his country."

—TENNYSON.

V

MUSSOLINI, THE FASCIST

IT is hardly possible to exaggerate the deplorable condition Italy was in after the War. Her internal enemies, Bolshevists, Anarchists, Communists, Socialists and Pacifists of all kinds, men who had striven to prevent Italy from entering the War and who, when she did enter it, tried by various means to undermine the morale of the soldiers, so as to bring about defeat or at least a peace at all costs, now, strengthened by Bolshevists sent by Lenin and financed by Russian gold, strove by all means in their power to make Italy another Russia, and, as Lenin openly said, once he conquered Italy he would make it his war-base to attack other European nations, and afterwards England and America.

The means they adopted to further their designs were many and varied, but one and all nefarious to the last degree. The War was brutally censured and victory mocked

and derided. Officers and soldiers returning, blood-stained and weary, from the battlefield, instead of being received in triumph and thanked and rewarded for their noble self-sacrifice, were jeered at and insulted. Officers were even assaulted and had their war-ribbons, medals and epaulets torn from their uniforms. When they got into a train the engine-driver refused to start it until they got out. Soldiers were often forcibly pulled out. The Italian flag was torn down from public buildings and the Red flag put in its place. Strikes were brought about throughout the land. In Venice we had what was called a "white strike" of the post and telegraph employees; that is to say, they were all at their posts, but refused to work whilst drawing an increased pay. In manufacturing cities like Milan and Turin, silk, cotton and metal factories were taken over by the Bolshevists, which they vainly tried to work on their own account. In the country the peasants were incited to seize the land of their masters, and to reap for themselves the crops.

Then these internal enemies were in power in all the chief towns throughout the country. They held the municipalities, collected taxes, imposed fresh taxation, and all the money

MUSSOLINI AS CORPORAL OF THE MILITIA

they collected was used in their own interest. The wages of all their adherents were increased, and posts for others were created, who had little else to do but draw their incomes. Thus large employers of labour, such as shipbuilders, carriage builders, electrical engineers and paper-makers were forced to take on men and pay them well, although they were incapable of doing the work assigned them. Indeed, the Communists themselves dictated their wages and their hours of work. During the War some 20,000 extra men were engaged by the railway authorities, on the distinct understanding that their work was temporary and would close with the War. Indeed, all of them had to sign a paper to that effect. The Socialists put them all on the permanent railway staff, although they had nothing to do. The result was that the State railways and State monopolies, like tobacco and salt, instead of yielding a large revenue as they formerly did, were run at a serious loss. It was the same with the municipalities. The city of Milan, the finances of which had always been flourishing, was run into debt at the rate of a million *lire* a month.

Italy was on the down-grade, travelling fast to bankruptcy and ruin. Meanwhile the

Government looked on complacently and did nothing, or what they did was anti-patriotic, anti-Italian. Some politicians even advocated a "Communistic Revolution." The Government issued an amnesty to all deserters and others who had shirked military duty. They told the officers to go about in *mufti* and leave their swords in the barracks, as their military dress and arms were provocative. Indeed, the Bolshevists raised the cry that war was now at an end, therefore disband the army and scrap the navy. Some even proposed to give back to Austria the cities and the territory taken from her and to abandon the colonies. Everywhere one heard the strains of the song of the Reds.

"Avanti popolo alla riscossa,
Bandiera rossa, bandiera rossa,
Bandiera rossa la trionferà
Evviva il Socialismo e la Libertà."

Hundreds of boys were christened with the name Lenin. I often saw it, too, painted in large letters on walls and houses. No wonder Lenin was pleased and looked forward hopefully and joyfully to the day when his plan to conquer Italy would be crowned with success.

Five months had now elapsed since the armistice was signed on the eleventh of No-

vember, 1918, and during these months Mussolini had never ceased to attack with vigour, through the pages of the *Popolo d'Italia,* the internal enemies of Italy and its inept and truckling Government, even more than once running personal risks. Orlanda Danese tells us that he was with Mussolini in his office when the Socialists marched to the Piazza in Milan, with their red banners, shouting, "Death to the Bourgeosie! Death to Mussolini! Long live Russia!" Danese was alarmed for the safety of Mussolini, who, however, was not in the slightest degree perturbed. Before him on his desk was a large bowl of milk with a spoon in it. With this spoon Mussolini stirred the milk from time to time as he leisurely sipped it. Then, pointing to his big revolver, loaded and primed, he said that he would stretch on the ground the first that entered his room, but he added, they are a pack of fools, and I say there are not two among them, not two, who would face this danger. The cry did rise, "To the office of Mussolini," but the police blocked the entrance to the Paolo de Cannobio street, where it was situated.

But now Mussolini saw that the time had come not for words only, but for action. The

Bolshevists, Communists and their followers were armed and did not scruple to use violence to enforce their will. "Red guards," not only armed but having machine-guns, were stationed at the entrances to all the public buildings. Mussolini saw that he must have a military organization, too, and meet force with force. By a stroke of genius, he thought of the *Roman Fasces,* the bundle of rods with the axe-head projecting, which the Lictors carried before the higher magistrates of Rome, with which criminals were scourged and beheaded. He proposed to call his new military organization *Fascismo* (Fascism) and to adopt the Fasces as its emblem. As is well known, the word is derived from the Latin *fasia* (Italian *fasciare*) to bind, so *Fascismo* was an organization of men bound together to clear Italy of its internal enemies, and to bind its loyal subjects, without class distinction, into a patriotic whole. An individual member is called a *Fascista,* in the plural *Fascisti.*

Accordingly, on the 25th of March, 1919, Mussolini called together his friends at Milan, when he laid before them his ideas and plans. These were enthusiastically approved and adopted, and so at that meeting

Fascismo was founded. He gave its birth publicity through the pages of the *Popolo d'Italia.* The enemy press, in order to show its contempt for the new movement, did not even speak of it. Mussolini only smiled and said, "The day is not far distant when they will speak of it," and he judged rightly. Owing to his indomitable will and indefatigable propaganda, groups of Fascists were formed in the chief towns, in which were included ex-officers and ex-soldiers, all of whom were as eager as Mussolini himself to extirpate Italy's internal enemies and to fight for king and country. Fascismo then spread to the villages. Everywhere young men and women who were proud of their Italianism, and who loved their country better than all others, which is true patriotism, became members of the Order, swearing allegiance to their *"Duce"* (chief), Mussolini, and receiving their *tessera.* Fascism took deep root and filled the land.

The dress of the Fascists, as everyone knows, is a black shirt. Mussolini chose that in contrast to the red shirt of the enemy. Their cap is really a Scottish Glengarry bonnet, only, instead of having black ribbons hanging down behind over the neck, it has a

black tassel attached by a double black cord to the crown of the bonnet, which dangles at the side of their head, and on the front it has a metal *Fasces,* the emblem of Fascism. Their mode of salutation is the old Roman one of the right arm, with the open palm thrown out straight from the shoulder. Mussolini armed the Fascisti, at first with *Manganelie* (loaded batons), from which comes our word mangle, which shows he meant to mangle Italy's enemies! But he intended to do more than that, for I remember him saying that if necessary he "would send every one of them to the hospital, or by a shorter road still, to their graves." And these men knew he would do it, for, as his son Vittorio said to a companion who urged him to ask his father for something that had been denied him, "No, I won't, for when Dad says 'No,' it's 'No.' "

Mussolini had declared war on Italy's enemies, and without loss of time the campaign opened. Skirmishes took place everywhere. Not a few here in Venice, which were not, however, of a very serious nature. But bye and bye I never opened a newspaper that did not contain accounts of sanguinary conflicts. In these conflicts bones were broken and lives

lost, but the Fascisti were invariably the conquerors. John Knox said, "Down with the nests and the rooks will fly away." But the Fascisti went one better than that, for they destroyed both the nests and the rooks. They burned "Halls of Labour" and "Communist Clubs." The Labour Hall here in Venice was sacked, its furniture broken into firewood, and all the books and documents found in it were burned. One of Mussolini's chief cares was to recapture the Municipal Buildings. One after another was besieged by a strong force of Fascisti, the Red Guards at their entrances were overcome, and their occupants, beginning with their Bolshevist Syndics, turned into the street. If there was resistance, the *manganelle* were brought into use, also revolvers, with which latterly Mussolini armed his Fascisti. In these conflicts sometimes not a few on both sides were wounded, and some even killed.

Eight months of conflict had now passed, from the 25th of March, 1919, till the 17th of November, when a ludicrous thing happened. Those enemies of law and order called upon the "Law" to arrest Mussolini as a Revolutionary, and, as the civil and police authorities in Milan were still Bolshevists and

Communists, this was done. The police officer who effected the arrest was Cavaliere Di Litala, who, long afterwards, in an issue of the *Corriere della Laguna,* gave to the public for the first time the story of it. On the 17th of November, 1919, he says, he received orders from Commendatore Gasti, the head *Questore* (Commissioner of Police) to go at 6 o'clock the next morning to the office of the *Popolo d'Italia* and make a search for arms and ammunition. He did so, but found nothing save a bundle of new unused revolvers in the safe. When he had reported at the *Questura* the result of his search, he received a second order to go and arrest Mussolini. Di Litala, who was secretly friendly to Mussolini and Fascismo, and who had reluctantly fulfilled his first commission, felt positively averse to the second one, but he had to obey. Arriving at the office, he said to Mussolini: "The *Signor Questore* desires to speak with you."

Mussolini boldly answered: "Tell the *Signor Questore* that if he desires to speak with me, I do not desire to speak with him."

Di Litala explained that he had a warrant for his arrest. "If that is the case," said Mussolini, "I had better go with you."

The two, with Mussolini's brother Arnaldo, got into a closed motor-car. Mussolini was perfectly composed. Mussolini's enemies had just gained an electoral victory, and all of them, Bolshevists, Communists and Socialists, with their red flags, were parading the streets singing and yelling. The motor-car had to open a way through the howling mob and, as Di Litala says, "If it had leaked out that Mussolini was in the car it is easy to imagine what would have happened." What did happen at the *Questura,* Di Litala does not tell us, but his detention was of short duration. Later on, he was again arrested by the Premier, his implacable enemy, Nitti, who at the present time is in London, carrying on with the priest Don Sturzo, by speech and writing, an implacable war against Mussolini and the Fascist régime. In this case he was handcuffed and put in a solitary cell. But Mussolini realized that the jailer and his superior who treated him with this indignity, did so in obedience to orders and against their humane feelings. I may here say that after Mussolini's accession to power he called these men to Rome, whose names he had taken down. They came before him with fear and trembling and began to apologize for their

conduct, when Mussolini stopped them, saying: "I saw that what you did was done from a sense of discipline and duty. There are traits of character which I admire, and I therefore appoint both of you to be members of my personal guard."

Daily the number of the Fascisti increased and daily they gained success. Lenin, knowing this, sent reinforcements to his emissaries. One day there arrived in Rome some thirty Russians with an immense quantity of luggage. This was taken to the custom house to be examined. When asked by the officials to open their trunks they declined to do so, saying that they were delegates sent by Lenin and that they therefore claimed the privileges of ambassadors. They were asked what their trunks contained, when they answered, "Nothing but clothes and other things necessary for our travelling." The custom house officials then said, "Well, we have no power to pass your boxes unopened, but we will lock them up for safety in a room and consult the Government." I have no doubt the Government would have accepted the plea of these Russians, had not Mussolini anticipated them. He was informed of what had taken place. Instantly he mustered a force of

Fascisti, marched at their head to the custom house, was shown the room; this he entered, then he burst open every trunk belonging to these so-called delegates, when it was seen they contained not clothing, but munitions, precious stones and bags of gold. Mussolini's duty ended here, but the Government dared not do otherwise than confiscate the boxes and their contents and ask the "delegates" to recross the frontier.

Mussolini's warfare was by no means over. Towns and cities were held by the enemy, such as Milan, Bologna, Ferrara, Ancona, Verona, Mantua and Florence, and these had to be besieged and taken. This was not done without much time, fatigue, suffering and death. The war against Italy's external enemies, the Austrians, lasted three and a half years, from May, 1915, to November, 1918, and Mussolini's war against Italy's internal enemies lasted exactly the same time, from March, 1919, until October, 1922, three and a half years.

This prolongation was largely due to the Government, which not only refused to check the Communists, but in a variety of ways openly and secretly assisted them, for they were allies. The Government had a suspicion

that a victory won by Mussolini over these men meant a victory over them as well. They felt that they would stand or fall together. If this was only a suspicion, Mussolini now made it a certainty. He said, when speaking at Naples and other towns, in October, 1922, *"Vogliamo governare l'Italia"* (We must govern Italy). He further said: "In May, 1915, we committed a grave mistake, for which we have ever since been suffering. We who then willed the War, we who then brought about Italy's intervention in the War, ought to have seized the reins of government."

That error he now set himself to redress, realizing that the fall of the Government was an absolute necessity in order to end the war. Accordingly he organized the famous "March on Rome." On the 28th of October, 1922, before the march took place, he issued the following proclamation: "We call Almighty God, and the spirits of our five hundred thousand dead to witness that one sole impulse constrains us, one sole wish unites us, one sole passion inflames us, namely, to contribute to the safety and the greatness of our country." The march then began. Black shirts from every province of the country, to the number

of 300,000, set out for the capital in three columns under Mussolini's able lieutenants. Mussolini himself, after organizing everything, remained at Milan. The first column from Lombardy, Genoa and other northern provinces took up its position at Cervetera, a little town to the west of the city; the second column, from the Abruzzi mountains and neighbouring provinces, took up its position at Tivoli, to the east of it; and the third column, from Tuscany and Romagna, occupied Monte Ratando, to the north of Rome. The capital was thus nearly surrounded by Fascisti ready to march into the city and overthrow the Government, if required to do so.

Signor Facta was then Premier. Mussolini sent him an ultimatum giving him forty-eight hours to clear out of Rome, otherwise his Black Shirts would compel him to do so. Facta, instead of clearing out, called into Rome two legions of soldiers and began to prepare for civil war. Such a war would have been an unimaginable disaster for Italy. It would have involved the whole country from the Alps to Sicily, and not only would it have caused a terrible loss of life and an untold amount of suffering and national damage, but it would also have meant a mutiny

in the army, for many of the officers and men, belonging to these legions called by Facta to Rome, had black shirts under their uniforms, so if they had been called upon to fight, they would have thrown off their uniforms and joined the Fascisti. Thus a section of the army and navy, as well as a large majority of the people, were on the side of Mussolini.

Signor Facta, having thus garrisoned Rome, and also closed its gates and erected barricades in different places, drew up a decree to put all Italy under martial law. This decree he took to the Quirmal Palace to get King Victor Emmanuel III. to sign it. One can imagine his consternation when the king, on his own initiative, without consulting anyone and without a moment's hesitation, tore the decree up instead of signing it, and said to Signor Facta, "I here and now dismiss you and your ministry, and I call Mussolini to be my Premier and to form a government."

That very day, Sunday, the 29th of October, Mussolini, who was in Milan as we saw, received the royal command to come to Rome. In a couple of hours he was on his way. His journey to the capital was like a triumphal procession. The next day, Monday, the 30th

MUSSOLINI AS GENERAL OF THE MILITIA

of October, at 10:45 A. M., he was in Rome, and, without changing his Fascist dress, in less than half an hour was in the presence of King Victor Emmanuel III., in the Quirnal Palace. His first words were, "Your Majesty, I beg your pardon for presenting myself in my black shirt, just returned from the battle, happily bloodless. I bring to your Majesty the Italy of the *Vittorio Veneto,* reconsecrated by our recent victories, and I am your Majesty's humble servant." The king then invested him with the Premiership and instructed him to form a ministry. Meanwhile the 300,000 Black Shirts had entered Rome and were defiling, in perfect order, before the palace, from the balcony of which King Victor Emmanuel III. saluted them, whilst they, waving their *tri-colour* banners, shouted, *"Viva il Re, Viva l' Italia, Viva Mussolini."* No longer were the strains of the *Bandier Rossa* heard, but those of *Giovinezza,* the triumphant hymn of the Fascisti.

" Dell'Italia nei confini
Son rifatti gli Italiani
Li ha rifatti Mussolini
Per la guerra di domani
Per la gioia del lavoro
Per la pace e per l'allora
Per la gogna di coloro

Che la Patria rinnegar
Giovinezza! Giovinezza!
Primavera di Bellezza
Della vita nell'asprezza,
Il tuo canto squilla e va!"

On the morrow, after this auspicious day, that is, on the last day of the month, the 31st of October, 1922, Mussolini had formed his cabinet and he and his ministers entered upon their labours, and a new era in the history of Italy had begun.

I may here say that last year, 1926, King Victor Emmanuel III., in recognition of Mussolini's "March on Rome," and of his having called him to take the reins of government, and of the new Italy thus created, signed a decree making the anniversary of the "March on Rome," the 28th of October, 1922, an annual national holiday. That this royal decree was in accordance with the will and desire of the people was shown by the unanimity and enthusiasm with which it was everywhere observed.

Mussolini, speaking in Rome, said: "During the past four years we have brought about a true revolution. We have buried the old Liberal-Democratic State, which, in homage to its immortal principles, allowed the war of

classes to degenerate into a social catastrophe. In its place we have put a National Fascista, and truly Democratic State, which gathers, controls, harmonizes, and considers the interests of all classes in society, fostering them all impartially. One result is that the labouring masses, instead of regarding the State with suspicion and dislike, looking upon it even as an enemy, now regard the State as a friend, and all seek to be a living part of the new *Fascista Corporation.* Under the old régime no law could be proposed which did not rouse opposition and protests on the part of the Deputies who represented factions in the country, and had to vote so as to secure votes. Now we impose our discipline and the people accept it. Why? Because they realize that this discipline is not the outcome of my individual caprice, but that it is the outcome of a profound national necessity."

One cannot but admire the marvellous national unity and solidarity of the Italian people which Mussolini has brought about. All are working with one heart and one mind—working to the extent of fatigue and self-sacrifice—not for themselves primarily, but for the increase in greatness of *l'Italia Nuova* (of the New Italy).

VI

MUSSOLINI, THE DEMOCRAT

"Till each man finds his own in all men's good,
And all men work in noble brotherhood."
—TENNYSON.

VI

MUSSOLINI, THE DEMOCRAT

THE late Dr. Brooke Foss Westcott, Bishop of Durham, speaking of Democracy in his work, *The Incarnations and Common Life,* says: "There is a danger lest outward political interpretation of the phrase should obscure its deeper spiritual meaning. The idea of Democracy is not, if we look below the surface, so much a form of government as a confession of *Human Brotherhood.* It is the equal recognition of mutual obligations. It is the confession of common duties, common aims, common responsibilities.

If Bishop Westcott's definition of Democracy is right, then Mussolini, though invested with dictatorial powers, is a true Democrat. For one of the great aims he ever keeps before him in his legislative work is to create an *Italian Brotherhood,* it is to unite all Italian employers and employed, servants and masters, rich and poor, as brothers in a great

Italian family, all mutually dependent on each other and all subordinate to the State, the supreme good of which they are all individually and unitedly to seek to promote; to quote words Mussolini has often used, *"Tutto nello Stato, niente all infuori dello Stato, niente contro lo Stato"* (All inside the State, none outside the State, none against the State). A gigantic task! As principal C. Grant Bobertson, of Birmingham University, said: "A single genius working in the isolation of a laboratory can create a revolution in science, but the remaking of the social structure and the ideas and habits of forty millions of self-governing men and women is a gigantic job, compared with which even revolutionary achievement in science is easy." But, as we shall see, Mussolini has done this.

In doing it he had, first of all, to destroy all racial distinctions. In 1861 the great Count Camillo Cavour, with his able colleagues, made the Kingdom of Italy. When that was done the Marquis Massimo d'Azeglio said to him, "We have made Italy, now we must make Italians." What did he mean? He meant the following: Before Count Cavour accomplished his work, the whole country was broken into a number of separate States.

There were two small kingdoms, that of Piedmont in the north and that of Naples, or, as it was called, the Kingdom of the two Sicilies, in the south, and between them there were half a dozen duchies and grand duchies, such as Tuscany, Parma and Modena, and there were the Papal States, six legations ruled by cardinals and thirteen delegations ruled by prelates. The rulers of all these States, with the exception of King Victor Emmanuel II., the constitutional sovereign of Piedmont and Sardinia, were tyrants who dreaded nothing so much as union, and so the policy of each one of them was to keep his subjects isolated as much as possible from those of neighbouring States and to make them believe that they were a separate people. Hence, there were no uniting railways and, indeed, few connecting roads, and, at the State frontiers, these roads were all barricaded by gates and walls and fiscal and custom obstacles. Each State had even its own coins and its own weights and measures. Indeed, this condition of things justified the Austrian Prince Metternich in saying, "Italy! there is no Italy! the name is only a geographical expression." Count Cavour then, with the forces of Piedmont, toppled

into the dust the thrones of all these petty tyrants, and he did this not against the will of their subjects, but with their consent and help, for they were all longing for freedom. Thus he created a united Italy under the sceptre of King Victor Emmanuel II.

But the inhabitants of each of these States had been so trained, as I have already said, to think of themselves as a separate people that, although these States no longer existed, they continued to call themselves by these names, such as Lombards, Venetians, Tuscans, Romans, Neapolitans and Sicilians, but never Italians. The incident mentioned in chapter 2, of Mussolini meeting an Italian woman on a bridge at Lausanne and on his asking her, "Are you not an Italian," and receiving the answer, "No, I am a Bergamosca" (a native of Bergamo), illustrates the same thing. Hence, the reason of Massimo d'Azeglio saying to Cavour, "We have made Italy, and now we must make Italians."

However, the making of Italians was to prove no easy matter. It was to take a much longer time than the making of Italy. Soon after the troops had entered Rome, in 1870, a Royal Commission was appointed to examine boys and girls in educational matters

with a view to arranging them in schools and classes. The chairman of the commission was a senator, Francesco Brioschi, and in his report he tells us many boys and girls could not speak Italian and excused their ignorance by saying, "We are Romans, and not Italians." In 1881, when I first came to Italy, people still continued to speak of themselves as Tuscans, Neapolitans, Venetians, and so on, but rarely did they throw away their racial distinctions and say, "We are Italians." Venice is visited during the summer months by two classes of people, namely, by Italians from all parts of the country, and by Englishmen, Scotchmen, Americans and many others. The term invariably applied to the former class is *Forestieri,* and to the latter, *Stranieri,* both words implying people from without, not native, foreigners and strangers.

However, Italianism has been for some years asserting itself. Mussolini has told us that the War did much to further it. Soldiers from Sicily to the Alps were then thrown together, and he says he rarely heard them say, "We are Sicilians," or "We are Neapolitans," but they generally said, "We are Italians." Now, his legislation has destroyed to a large extent, in speech and even

in thought, all these racial distinctions. All school-children in the Fascist "Balilla Squadrons" are called "*Piccoli Italiani*" (little Italians).

But beyond the recognition of human brotherhood, Bishop Westcott, in his definition of a Democratic State, as we have already seen, says: "It is the equal recognition of mutual obligations; it is the confession of common duties, common aims and common responsibilities." That is to say, in a true Democratic State, as in a family, there ought to be no divisions, no antagonisms, no conflicts of interests, but all should in his own sphere work harmoniously together for the common good, in subordination to its need. This desirable state of matters Mussolini had next to bring about. He did this, first, by removing obstacles to its attainment which he found existing. For example, *all secret societies were suppressed.* The law that did this was passed in 1925. The principal society of this kind was Freemasonry. Perhaps it is well that I should here state that Italian Freemasonry had little in common with Freemasonry in other countries. It was a political society working in secret against the Government and State. Then, trades

Risi, Rome

MUSSOLINI AS VIOLINIST

unions were also abolished because they were not only imbued with a bitter party spirit, but because they also set class against class, denouncing capitalists as tyrants, and the proletariat as their victims. A party spirit of any kind is incompatible with Bishop Westcott and with Mussolini's Democratic State. Mussolini even said, "Perish my own party if it is necessary for the common good."

Having thus cleared the ground of all obstacles, Mussolini had next, by legislation, to impress upon the people their mutual dependence on each other, their mutual obligations, and to cause them to realize the importance and dignity of their work, when it is performed not exclusively for the workers' own interest, but as a service rendered to society and to the State. In the words of Bishop Westcott, he had now to impress upon the nation the fact that "Each in his proper sphere, workman, capitalist, teacher —is equally a servant of the State, feeding in his measure that common life by which he lives; that work is not measured, but made possible by the wages rendered to the doer, and that if we willingly offer to our country what we have, we shall in turn share in the rich fulness of the life of all."

Mussolini has striven, by speeches and by legislative acts, to cause the nation to realize these truths and to act upon them. One such act, and an important one, is what is called *The Syndical Law,* which was passed on the 11th of March, 1926. The Apostle Paul, speaking of the human body, says, "We have many members in one body, but not all the members have the same office," and Bishop Westcott says, speaking of the family, "Wide differences of position and duty co-exist in the family," and, as this Syndical Law shows, Mussolini recognizes that the same diversity of position and work exists in the State, and on a much larger scale.

These differences in the body, in the family, and in the State are organic, and are essential for their respective work. In the State there are, therefore, capitalists and workmen, there are owners and occupiers, there are masters and servants, but the interests of these men are not, as Mussolini shows, antagonistic. On the contrary, they are interdependent, the one is the complement of the other. The one could not exist without the other. This Syndical Law, therefore, takes account of both and of their respective interests, and is framed to secure

their working together in perfect harmony, with one end in view, the prosperity and the greatness of the nation.

Instead, then, of one-sided trades unions, this law has created *Industrial and Professional Syndicates,* composed of employers of labour and of workmen who are under the State. Should differences arise at their meetings which they themselves cannot settle, Mussolini has provided for such cases a "Magistracy of Labour," to which they can be carried, and should these courts fail to bring about an amicable settlement, then the case can be carried to Mussolini himself in the Chigi Palace in Rome. Occasionally this has been done, and he said lately that he had never failed yet to send both parties away perfectly satisfied with his decision. Thus, all strikes and lockouts are rendered unnecessary and, indeed, are illegal, being regarded as crimes against the State and nation.

Another piece of legislation of still greater importance in securing a Democratic State, where each contributes to the common life and shares in the rich fulness of the life of all, is what is called *The Charter of Labour,* which was promulgated in April, 1927.

This does not abrogate the *Syndical Law,*

but embodies it and supplements it. It is a long document containing thirty distinct articles, the nature of which may be gathered from the translation I give in part of the chief of these articles. Article 1 tells us that the Italian nation is a moral, political and economic unity, which is perfectly realized in the Fascist State. Article 2, that production in mass is a single unit from the national point of view. Article 3, that the industrial and professional syndicates (created by the law of 1926) are the only ones that have the legal right to represent the whole body of employers and workers. Article 5, the Magistracy of Labour is the State court for the settlement of labour disputes. Article 7, the Corporative State believes that in the interests of the nation private enterprise is the most efficient and the most useful instrument in the field of production. (In accordance with this belief, Mussolini has already denationalized the telephonic system and has intimated his intention to denationalize the State railways and other State monopolies.)

Article 9, the intervention of the State in economic production takes place only when private initiative is lacking or is defective, and when the political interests of the State

are jeopardized. Article 12, the question of salaries is outside all law and is left to mutual agreements, but they ought to correspond with the state of trade and the requirements of living. Article 15, workmen have a right to a weekly day of rest and—Article 16—to an annual paid holiday if they have worked continuously throughout the year. Article 19, breaches of discipline, or acts which disturb the normal working of a company, are punishable by fine, suspension or dismissal. Article 26, *La Previdenza* is a fund to which employers and employed will contribute in equal shares to aid those who have met with accidents or who, because of old age or other infirmities, are unable to work, which is a high manifestation of the principle of collaboration. Article 27, *the Fascist State* will do all that is in its power to improve insurance against accidents and illnesses. Article 30, education, instruction, and especially professional instruction, is one of the chief duties of the syndicates, and they must also co-operate with the *Dopo-Lavoro* (after-work) recreation national schemes.

When this *Charter of Labour* had been drawn and adopted by the Grand Council, Mussolini said, "I deem it befitting that I

now call the attention of the whole Italian people to this act of will and of faith of the Fascist régime, for by this it demonstrates that the forces of production, capitalist and workman, can be reconciled, and that only by this harmony can their work be fruitful. Besides which, it tends to elevate materially and morally the most numerous classes in the nation, who now, with full knowledge, have entered *de juro and de facto* within the orbit of the ***Fascist State.***

Mussolini, by the destructive and constructive work I have related, has gone far to realize, if he has not already realized, Bishop Westcott's ideal Democratic State, with its recognition of mutual obligations, of common duties, common aims and common responsibilities. Indeed, I may say that he has done so, for, speaking in the Camera, on May the 26th of this year, 1927, he proudly said: "Today we announce to the world the creation of a powerful Italian State, united from the Alps to Sicily, and this State is the expression of a concentrated, united, organized Democracy." He has thus realized the true Democracy of Christianity, which tells us that we have many members, but all the members, being many, being one body, that

there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one of another.

Let me give one recent fact to show that this Christian Democratic State has really been created in Italy. Last year the *lire* had fallen very low, its purchasing power was only one-fifth of what it is at par. Accordingly, the prices of all kinds of things, food, clothing, house rents, salaries and wages were raised. But this year (1927), owing to the improved financial condition of Italy brought about by Mussolini, the value of the *lire* has increased, indeed, its purchasing power has been nearly doubled. Mussolini, therefore, appealed to all the merchants and shop-keepers, and to all house proprietors and house agents to lower their prices from by ten to twenty per cent. This they all did without a grumble. The same reduction was recommended to be made in the salaries of all civil servants, which category includes not only all government and municipal servants, but also all railway employees, all post and telegraph workers, all national school teachers and many others, and all these willingly accepted the reduction. But what is more remarkable still, the syndicates of workmen,

such as builders, bricklayers, carpenters, iron-workers, cotton and silk spinners, and many other classes, including even day-labourers, voluntarily and spontaneously voted to accept a reduction from five to twenty per cent on their wages.

This fact alone shows that a true spirit of comradeship, a true Democratic Brotherhood, has been created throughout Italy. It is no longer "Each for himself," but "Each for all and all for each." "Each helping each, the highest good to gain." Duties have been substituted for rights, and, as Bishop Westcott says: "This substitution changes the centre of gravity of the whole social system and brings the promise of a stable peace." As a matter of fact, it has already done so in Italy, for contentment and "Stable Peace" now reign throughout the land.

VII

MUSSOLINI, THE REFORMER

"I have undertaken the task confided to me to give material and moral greatness to the Italian people."

—MUSSOLINI.

VII

MUSSOLINI, THE REFORMER

ON the 1st of November, 1922, Mussolini was at his desk in the Chigi Palace by 5 o'clock. At 9 o'clock, when all the staff of Government workers ought to be at theirs, he made a round of their offices, but found very few. Like Charles Lamb, they were in the habit of coming half an hour late in the morning and going away half an hour earlier in the evening to make up for it. That day they were all made to understand that fines and dismissal would be the reward for such conduct. He thus taught them a lesson in punctuality and also in honesty.

Quite recently Mussolini told a friend of mine that he worked eight hours a day, but it was from 8 A. M. till 8 P. M. I am perfectly sure he works much longer than that, for he is never in bed before midnight. As he rises on the stroke of seven, he thus allows himself only seven hours' sleep. He has given an

order that he is not to be called during these hours unless something of evil import has happened which may need immediate attention. If something good has happened, he said, that can stand over till the morning. However, like Mr. Gladstone, he can sleep when he likes, and so, when he feels tired out, as he does at times, like Mr. Gladstone, he snatches a ten-minutes' repose, after which, he says, he feels quite refreshed.

He likes quick movement and is impatient of anything slow. This comes out conspicuously in his motor-car driving, for he is constantly exceeding the legal speed. The other day, returning from Forli, where he had been to see his family and friends, as he raced along the straight road to Bologna, a policeman signalled him to stop. Mussolini did so, but when the policeman saw who it was he begged his pardon and said: "Your Excellency, drive on."

"I will do nothing of the kind," said Mussolini, "take down my name, and I shall pay the fine."

On another occasion, when he was going on the same mission to Forli, the train for some reason was late in starting, so he set off in his motor-car. Bye and bye he came to a

Photo. Porry-Pastorel, Rome

MUSSOLINI WITH HIS LION CUB

level crossing and found the gates shut against him. "Why are the gates closed?" he asked.

"Because I expect Mussolini's train," was the answer.

"And when does his train pass?"

"When Mussolini wills it."

"And who is this Mussolini?"

"He is the Head of the Government."

"Do you know him?"

"No, but I hope to get a glimpse of him when the train passes."

"And suppose that I am Mussolini?"

The gateman looked at him and recognized him and, ashamed and fluttered, said, "Your Excellency, I will open the gates for you at once."

"You will do nothing of the kind; you'll wait till Mussolini's train passes," and until it passed Mussolini amused himself playing with the children of the gateman, sitting on the low stone pillar to which the gate is attached when it is open.

But, although a busy man, it is wonderful how he finds time to receive visitors. He received an amateur painter the other day, who evidently thought himself a great artist, for he had painted Mussolini's por-

trait and had brought it for him to sign. Mussolini, gazing at it, said, "Is that my likeness?"

"Yes, Your Excellency, and I would like you to sign it."

"I had better do so," said Mussolini. "It may help people to recognize me."

But sometimes it is impossible for Mussolini to see callers, however willing he may be to do so. One day the usher entered his office and said: "Your Excellency, there is a lady who wishes to see you."

Mussolini: "Tell her I am busy, but she may call again in four or five days."

The usher delivered the message, but returned, saying: "The lady says she is your cousin and must see Your Excellency at once."

"Cousin! Cousin!" said Mussolini. "I have no cousin. Tell her to send in her name, address, and other particulars." This she did, and the paper was laid before him.

"Oh, yes!" he said, "I remember now; she is my cousin. But it is twenty years since I saw her. Tell her I am busy, and to come back in five days."

The usher duly delivered the message, but the woman insisted, and said: "Tell my cousin

I must see him now. It is a matter of great importance and urgency."

This was rehearsed to Mussolini, who sternly answered, "Tell her she has waited twenty years to see me, and she can wait another five days."

When Mussolini started work one of the first problems he had to face and to solve was that of the economic condition of the country. That was in a lamentable state. The late Government, with its allies the red shirts, had increased taxation abnormally, and yet had so squandered the public money that municipalities and the country itself were on the verge of bankruptcy. Thousands of men were employed in offices and in public works carried on by the Government and by municipalities, who had really little or nothing to do but draw their salaries. The policy of the Government and of the local authorities in cities, towns and villages was to retain and increase the number of their Bolshevist, Communist and Socialist adherents by creating for them easy, "fat jobs." Mussolini had to weed them all out. He began by reducing the men in the different departments of the Government by a third and even a half, and yet he got more work done than before. He had

also to reduce, in many instances, their salaries, which were out of all proportion to the work which they did. He fixed his own salary at 40,000 *lire* a year. Besides being Premier and *Duce del Fascismo,* he holds five portfolios, namely, those of Foreign Affairs, of the Army, of the Nevy, of the Air Forces and of the Syndicates of Labour. But, as Mr. Gladstone did when he held several portfolios, Mussolini only takes the salary of one. The scale of pay of Government officials descends rapidly to that of five hundred dollars a year.

In the works in connection with the Government to which I have referred, a similar reduction of employees and of the salaries of those retained was effected. One of his biggest works in this economic task was to get rid of 20,000 railway men who were employed temporarily during the War and whom the Socialists illegally retained, as related in the preceding chapter. This he did without arousing any public remonstrance, for he found work for most of them by starting railway plants and carriage works. I may here say that after this reduction the number of railway employees was fully 220,000, which was still largely in excess of what was

really necessary, and so Mussolini has since got rid of another 40,000, so that the number now stands at 180,000, and the railways were never so efficiently worked.

On the 16th of November, that is, when he had been in power but two weeks, he made his first great speech in Parliament. Among other things, he said: "With 30,000 young men armed to the teeth, ready to obey my orders, I am prepared to punish all who may attempt to defame or besmirch Fascismo. I have power to make this House, so mean and sordid, a bivouac for my cohorts. I have power to abolish Parliament altogether and constitute a Government exclusively of Fascists, but I do not intend to do so, at least, for the present. I do not wish to govern against the House, but the House must realize its peculiar position, which renders it liable to be dissolved in two days or in two years. I call for full power, for I assume full responsibility. All the problems which touch the life of Italy, which former Governments lacked the courage and the will to face, the Government of today will attack and solve.

"The first and fundamental problem is that of economy, of finance. We must, with all

the speed possible, adjust a balance between income and expenditure. My internal policy is all summed up in three words: Economy, Labour, Discipline. In regard to foreign policy, I declare that all the peace treaties, good and bad, which have been signed and ratified shall be carried out, although no treaty is eternal and unchangeable. I propose, in conversations I may have with the Prime Ministers of England and France, to face with all frankness, notwithstanding its complexity, the peace treaty of Versailles and the position of Italy amongst the great powers. We shall labour with pure hearts and with alert minds to bring about and promote the prosperity of the country, serving it with humility, with absolute devotion and with a sense of duty which I may call religious, and may God Almighty assist me to conduct to a victorious end my arduous task."

The last paragraph is very splendid. The words remind us of those of Thomas Carlyle, who said, "All true Work is sacred. In all true Work, were it but true hand labour, there is something of Divineness. All true Work is Religion. *"Laborare est orare"* (Work is Worship).

Mussolini had now to begin the work of

construction. He had to intensify production. He found industries of all kinds hampered and languishing. He had to relieve them of their burdens, in some cases of oppressive taxations, and he had to quicken and revivify them. In the north of Italy the numerous silk and cotton mills were encouraged to import new machinery and to bring their works up to date. Some years ago I obtained permission to take a British Government inspector through the cotton mill here in Venice, which is one of the largest in Italy. The inspector's verdict was that he had rarely seen, even in Great Britain, a better equipped mill from an industrial and from a sanitary point of view. The machinery was of the best, the building was well lighted and ventilated, as it stands clear of all other buildings, and the air was pure and sweet, owing to the electrical apparatus for absorbing all particles of dust. Last year the amount of cotton and silk goods manufactured exceeded by some thousands of tons those of all preceding years.

Agriculture has received the special attention of Mussolini, so much so that his propaganda is always called *La Battaglia del Grano* (The Grain Battle). It was a battle,

for he found primitive modes of cultivation in vogue which peasant farmers were reluctant to abandon, and he found a prejudice existing against modern agricultural machinery. The reader may remember the fact stated in a former chapter that Mussolini, when he was a Socialist, broke a reaping machine at Forli, for which he suffered imprisonment. He did it, as he thought then, in the interest of the working men. At Voghera a farmer-proprietor showed me ploughing and reaping machines that he had imported from America, which the peasants refused to use and afterwards destroyed. However, all these obstacles were speedily overcome by Mussolini, and then, to the surprise and delight of proprietors, farmers and peasants, he had them taught what is now called "scientific agriculture." Last year, 1926, he instituted a number of *Ambulatory Agricultural Chairs*. The professors who filled them were experts in the knowledge of soils, of chemical and other manures, and of the various varieties of wheat. They also knew of the most modern agricultural implements and where to procure them. They visited some 20,000 places, making a careful examination of the soil in each place. They

THE BATTLE OF THE GRAIN

then held public conferences and private discussions with the farmers and the *cotters,* thus putting at their disposal the knowledge and instruction they required in order to secure the best results from their labours. The conferences were well attended and the advice given eagerly followed.

Let me mention one or two of the immediate results of this propaganda. The demand for artificial manures, such as sulphates, phosphates and nitrogenous materials, went up by thousands of tons. For example, the province of Alessandria, which used some 18,000 tons of these materials, ordered some 6,000 tons more; Brescia, for which 40,000 formerly sufficed, consumed 50,000; and Ancona, which took some 2,400, required about 3,000. And so it was in every province in Italy.

Another immediate demand was for the most up-to-date agricultural machinery. Not scores nor hundreds, but thousands of steam-ploughs, sowing machines and reaping machines were bought. Provinces in which there were but hundreds have now thousands, and places where there were but few, or even none, have now scores, even hundreds. Let me give a few examples of these facts. In

northern Italy the province of Brescia had formerly 100 steam-ploughs and about the same number of sowing-machines, now it has 200 of the former and 300 of the latter. The province of Alessandria had some 40 steam-ploughs and 200 sowing-machines. Now it has 110 steam-ploughs and 400 sowing-machines. In the province of Catayare, with an area of 3,000 square miles and over half a million inhabitants, there were but four steam-ploughs and not a single sowing-machine; now there are 30 steam-ploughs and 20 sowing-machines. The province of Perugia has taken a long stride ahead. It had but seven steam-ploughs; now it has over 50, and its sowing-machines have mounted up from 120 to 470.

I might go over the whole seventy-eight provinces of Italy and show a proportionate acquisition to have been made by each one of them. The net result is that, with infinitely less labour, each acre of land has yielded several hundredweights of wheat above what it ever produced before. This made last year's crop a record one. According to the *Statistica Agraria* there were garnered sixty millions and five hundred thousand *quintali*. As a quintale is two hundredweights, that makes

six millions and fifty thousand tons. This is a million more than has ever been produced in any previous year, and it was brought about without any material increase in the acreage sown. But as Mussolini, through the Minister of Public Works, is engaged draining and rendering arable tens of thousands of acres of marsh land, up till now the breeding-ground of mosquitoes and of malaria, the wheat acreage of next year and of following years will be greatly increased, so that in time Mussolini hopes his ambition may be realized, namely, that of making Italy self-supporting as regards cereal food.

Mussolini, by draining and rendering wholesome these swamps and morasses, secures another benefit for the people, as important as the grain crop. He is gradually ridding Italy of malaria. Whilst I write I see he has just said in Parliament that this terrible scourge claimed, in, 1925, as many as 3,588 victims. Besides which, it embitters the lives of thousands more and renders helpless and sad the tender years of untold numbers of children. But each year the statistics show that death and suffering from malaria are decreasing and Mussolini hopes that one day the disease will itself be stamped out.

As was to be expected, Mussolini has devoted special attention to education. Since the days of the great Cavour, education has been, throughout the whole country, *national, secular, compulsory, free and lay.* There are no clerical teachers, all are laymen and laywomen who have been thoroughly trained during a curricilum of eight years in normal schools and teachers' colleges. The State says it is our duty to see to the kind of education every boy and girl receives, and consequently it prescribes the text-books to be used and the course of study to be followed. Any author may prepare a school text-book, but it cannot be used unless it has received the imprimature of his Supreme Council of Education in Rome. I need hardly say that all Bolshevists, Communists and Socialists are disqualified to be national school teachers. At six years of age every healthy boy and girl must be sent to school. Parents neglecting to obey this rule are liable to be fined.

Until two years ago no religion was taught in any school, although the text-books were all eminently moral, patriotic and, to a certain extent, even religious. Indeed, I remember that Signor Bacelli, a very scholarly Minister of Education, ordered the insertion

in certain text-books of passages from the New Testament. Signor Bacelli was a great Greek scholar, and he chose the passages from the famous version of Giovanni Diodati, because of its accuracy and also because of its classic Italian. However, Mussolini thought it not good to have no religion taught, and so he announced that he would introduce into the schools some doctrines of Christianity, not peculiar to any church, but common to Christianity everywhere. Accordingly, this was done. The Crucifix was placed in the schoolrooms and the teachers now open their classes with the Lord's Prayer, in the saying of which the children join, after which the teacher offers a short extemporary prayer, asking God for Christ's sake to help the teacher to instruct and educate rightly the minds of the children, and that the children may be helped to profit by what is taught to them.

Medical men from time to time visit the schools and examine the children as to the cleanliness of their bodies and clothing, also as to their general health. All schools are furnished with lavatories and poor children are occasionally taken to the public baths, and even to the seaside, for bathing. The

money derived from the recent tax on bachelors is devoted to the lodging, feeding, clothing, and education of orphan children. Where I have visited public schools, elementary and secondary, I have always found everything in an admirable condition.

Mussolini has also tackled the question of intemperance. Quite recently, in the British House of Commons, a question was raised as to when a man may be said to be drunken. If the answer is, when he is unable to walk steadily and control his movements, then there is very little drunkenness in Italy. One rarely sees a man in that condition. But there are degrees in drunkenness, and if a man may be said to be drunken or intoxicated when, by reason of drinking, he has deprived himself of the *will* and, to a certain degree, of the *power* to do his daily work, then the answer is different. A clever Venetian workman, whom I had for years, too often would say to me on a Monday morning, *"Non voglio lavorare oggi"* (I have no will to work today). I would answer, "Giovanni, as usual, you took too much wine yesterday (Sunday is the day when people are apt to do this), you had better go home and sleep it off." And this he usually did.

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MUSSOLINI'S WIFE AND CHILDREN

In dealing with the question of intemperance, Mussolini said that whilst in the wine-producing countries of France and Spain there were two million *ettari* of land devoted to vineyards, in Italy there were three millions. The deaths from alcohol amounted, in 1925, to 1,315. There were 187,000 shops that sold drink, and of these, Mussolini said, he had closed 25,000 and was proceeding energetically to the closing of many more. As he was no longer dependent on the votes of the drink-sellers or of their clients, he could indulge in the luxury of closing these places that dispensed a cheap and ruinous felicity! Some little time ago he decreed that no new place for the sale of intoxicating drinks should be opened for a year. Also that no drink should be given or sold to a boy or girl under sixteen years of age, nor may drink be supplied to such children even when sent by their parents to purchase it. He has also regulated the hours when shops that sell drink may be opened and closed. Formerly licenses could be purchased to keep such shops open any number of hours, or not to close them at all. There is a famous restaurant here in Venice (Florian's) which is said never to have been closed, day nor

night, Sunday nor Saturday, for a hundred years.

Mussolini, in the interests of the young, has also legislated in regard to smoking. No boy under sixteen years of age is allowed to smoke in public. Only yesterday a boy aged fourteen was smoking a cigarette in the Piazza San Marco, when a policeman touched him on the shoulder and said: "Throw that cigarette away instantly," which the boy did, and he was allowed to go free. Another boy in the Piazza fared differently. He, too, was smoking and was similarly accosted by a policeman. The boy proved he was more than sixteen years old, but became so indignant at being attacked that he swore. "Now," said the policeman, "I arrest you, not for smoking, but for swearing; come along with me to the *Publica Sicurezza*" (the police office).

Swearing in public is thus prohibited to the young as well as smoking; and, indeed, all are cautioned against it. In many public places and in railway carriages, tramways and other conveyances notices are put up with the words, "*Non bestemmiare mai più* (Do not swear ever again). On papers and official documents supplied by teachers to students

and young children are inscribed the words, *"Che besternmia offende Iddio e disonora la Patria"* (He who swears offends God and dishonours his Country). In forbidding swearing and in many other of his prohibitive legislative acts, Mussolini has followed the example of the old Venetian Republic. There are not a few stones still to be seen in Venice, built into walls and set up in prominent places, on which are inscribed laws forbidding gambling, indecencies, swearing, etc. One such at Campo Santa Fosca, where Fra Paolo Sarpi's monument stands, bears the words: *"Bestemmia non più, ma lodate Gesù"* (Swear no more, but praise Jesus).

In the interest of public morality, Mussolini has also prohibited the sale of indecent pictures, of indecent post-cards, of indecent photographs and of indecent literature of all kinds. At one time such things were flaunted in the eye of the public at railway book-stalls, newspaper *kiosks,* and in the windows of tobacconists' shops. Now nothing of that kind is visible anywhere. As in all countries, there is a censorship of theatres and of cinematic shows, but boys and girls under the age of sixteen are to be refused admittance to such places when the scenes enacted or exhibited

are those of cleverly enacted crimes or of base human passions.

As Mussolini holds that the health of the nation ought to be one of the first cares of the State, he has, on that account and also in the interest of economy, decreed that no more fine flour be used by confectioners or bakers, but only whole-meal flour, or what is often called war-flour. He apparently is convinced that medical men are right when they affirm that very fine flour is not only less nutritious than whole-meal flour, but is even detrimental to health. As this law has only been in operation since August, 1926, it is too soon to look for any marked results, but medical men do not doubt that they exist. The New Health Society, in London, of which Sir Arbuthnot Lane is president, is unremitting in its advocacy of the use of whole-meal flour. Quite recently Sir Arbuthnot Lane was in Rome, seeing Mussolini, whom he congratulated on the fact that all the Italians were now using whole-meal flour.

The law putting a tax on all unmarried men, between the ages of 25 and 65 years, came into operation on the first day of this year (1927). As it is estimated that there are over 3,000,000 such men in Italy, and as

Photo. Porry-Pastorel, Rome

MUSSOLINI'S VILLA OUTSIDE ROME

the tax to be levied varies from 20 to 50 *lire* a year, according to the social status of the bachelor, the revenue to be derived from it may amount to 50,000,000 *lire* annually. But this sum does not go to meet the general expenses of Government; it is to be devoted to institutions to aid maternity and to maintain and educate orphans and poor children. Of such institutions, 5,700 exist at present, but all are more or less inefficient for lack of money. Thus a great deal of good will be effected. But this is not the only good, nor perhaps the chief one.

Mussolini knows that the family and not the individual is the basis of the nation. He knows that celibacy can never elevate and purify the social life of a people, but that the family is fitted to do it, and does do it. He also knows how much the ancient greatness of Rome rested on her lofty conception of family life. Therefore he wishes Italians to marry. Further, he believes that it is their duty to marry, not only for their own sakes, but also for the sake of society and the nation, and he trusts that this new celibacy law will encourage them to do this. Italy has at the present time forty millions of inhabitants.

Mussolini hopes that before this century is finished she may have sixty millions.

Lastly, all Fascists have sworn on their honour to conduct themselves at all times and in all circumstances in a manner befitting the dignity of their position as part and parcel of the Fascist Government. Then all civil servants—that is a phrase which, like a net, encloses millions of Italy's inhabitants—for it embraces all Government and municipal officials, all university and college professors, all national school teachers, all railway employees, all post and telegraph men and women, all custom and excise people, and all those engaged in factories for tobacco and salt, for these articles are still Government monopolies—all these people have taken an oath in the presence of the Royal Commissaries of their respective towns and villages, not only to fulfil conscientiously the duties of their several callings, but to behave at all times in a way becoming the citizens and subjects of a re-created Fascist Italy.

Now, what is the result of all these reformatory measures and of Mussolini's work in general? Let me first of all cite the testimony of visitors. Living and working here in Venice, I am brought into contact contin-

ually with English-speaking people from Great Britain, from the United States, from Canada, New Zealand, and our other colonies, and I from time to time ask them what their impressions are of Italy. Those who were here five years ago, that is, before Mussolini entered into power, have invariably answered me, "Why, everything has changed for the better. Neither the country nor the people are the same. Travelling has vastly improved, trains are punctual, carriages are clean and comfortable, we have no longer any anxiety with regard to our luggage, hotel and shop-keepers are kind and polite and honest in their dealings with us. Even the appearance of the country which we pass through indicates a vast improvement in agriculture." Then, again, when I ask visitors who have come here for the first time what their impressions of Italy are, they invariably express their astonishment and admiration of the evidence that they everywhere see, in city, village and country, of a contented people and a prosperous and progressive nation.

From my own personal knowledge I can testify that since Mussolini's Fascist Government entered into power, in 1922, not only has the condition of the Italian people im-

proved materially, but, what is much more important, it has vastly improved both morally and spiritually. The whole tone of society has been elevated and purified.

The circulation of the Book of books throughout Italy tops by far and away that of any other book or books. Over half a million copies of the whole Bible, or of parts of it, are sold annually, and as everyone knows, of all agencies, not any other nor all others put together, equal the Bible, for it alone has the power to renew and regenerate human nature and thus effectually and permanently to promote the well-being and the happiness of the individual, the family, and the nation. Mussolini has never showed himself a truer or a greater reformer than when he uttered in public these memorable words: *"Il Nuovo Testamento è il migliore libro che io conosco nel mondo"* (The New Testament is the best book that I know of in the world). With this book alone—the Book of books—Italy will go onward and upward, from strength to strength, from victory to victory, *esta perpetua!*

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